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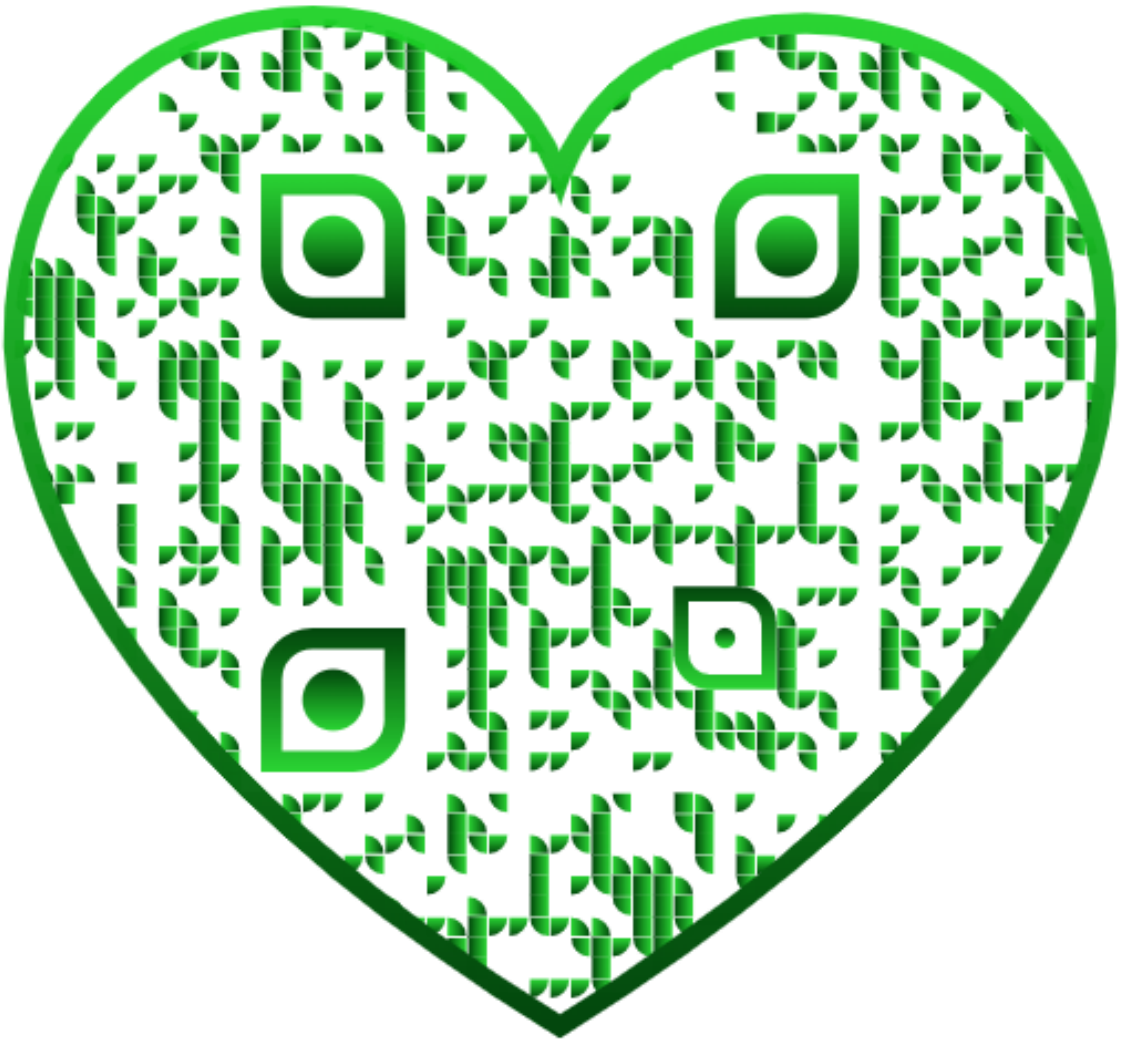

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Welcome...

"Some of what you practise should sound sh*t, because then you know you are working on something that needs to be worked on" – so says Guthrie Govan in our interview on p46. Now, while my inner stand-up comic retorts, "Well, I *must* be doing it right then!", it's worth noting what a solid point Guthrie makes. Go beyond your comfort zone and gradually you'll improve.

It's a point made in a different way by Sophie Lloyd, who also appears in the mag with a bespoke video lesson she's made. She identifies three elements of practice (speed, accuracy, play clean), but recommends working on only two at a time. A key part of practice is breaking down the music you play into its constituent parts. Refine each bit separately, technique by technique, sound by sound, and so on, and, here's that phrase once again, gradually you'll improve.

There's so much compiled wisdom in this special All-Star Masterclass issue of TG. From our bite-sized tips pieces with The Darkness, Iron Maiden and Philip Sayce, to our exclusive video lessons with Cory Wong, Josh Middleton and many more, I think there's enough here to keep us all creatively inspired until Christmas! Make sure to check out our videos at the link shown on p5 and throughout the mag. And remember, if you struggle with anything while you practise, it's okay if it doesn't sound great right away. You're making progress!

Enjoy the issue, and I'll see you next month!

Chris Bird Editor

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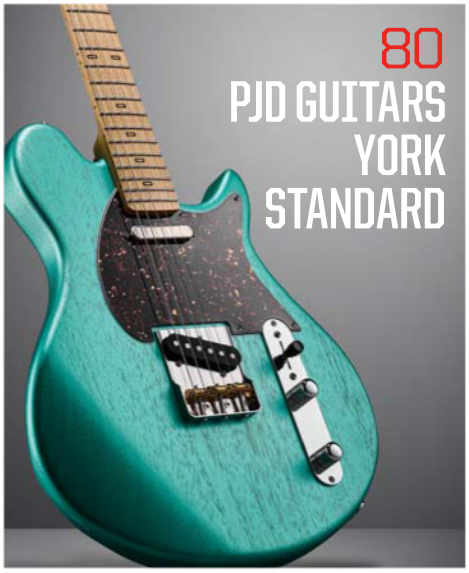

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Type this link into a web browser on any computer, smartphone or tablet and you'll be directed to TG's website at guitarworld.com. Here you'll find all the audio and video for the issue, available to download or stream.

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Words Stuart Williams Photography Olly Curtis

TONE TORNADO

Shergold's latest model places a retro-rocker at a bargain price point

It's been eight years since the Shergold name was resurrected in a partnership between distributor Barnes and Mullins, and renowned UK luthier, Patrick James Eggle. Now, the brand has announced the release of one of its most exciting guitars to date: the Shergold Telstar.

Taking the form of a few classic guitar designs all rolled into one, the Telstar's poplar body combines T-style, offset and singlecut elements for a guitar that's oozing retro-rock appeal.

This is added to by the inclusion of two Page FilterSonic humbuckers – which promise a blend of warm and bright tones, with "bags of nuanced character" and wired to a simple three-position switch with master tone/volume controls.

The bolt-on neck is maple, topped with a laurel fingerboard and 22 frets, with a hardtail, string-through-body bridge. At the other end, there's a six-in-line matching headstock, complete with further retro detailing courtesy of rally stripes. Best of all, the Telstar costs a wallet-friendly £379.

UP CLOSE

Pickups

The Page FilterSonic humbuckers are giving off Gretsch-like garage vibes with their heavy chrome and black visuals.

Simple features

Two pickups, a three-way toggle and master tone/volume controls mean the Telstar is primed for straightforward performance.

Finishes

The Telstar comes in a choice of two finishes: Pastel Blue or Champagne Gold, and we have to say we can't decide which we like best!

SCENE

YOUR NEWS IN GUITARS

DARK AND DARKER
Reba Meyers (centre) with Code Orange

ALBUM

"IT'S JUST A GOOD GUITAR SOUND!"

THE NEW **CODE ORANGE** ALBUM IS MORE MELODIC, BUT DEVILISHLY HEAVY...

Code Orange are one of the most exciting names to emerge in heavy music over the last decade. In new album *The Above*, guitarist Reba Meyers combines clean melodies with the sound of "pure evil"…

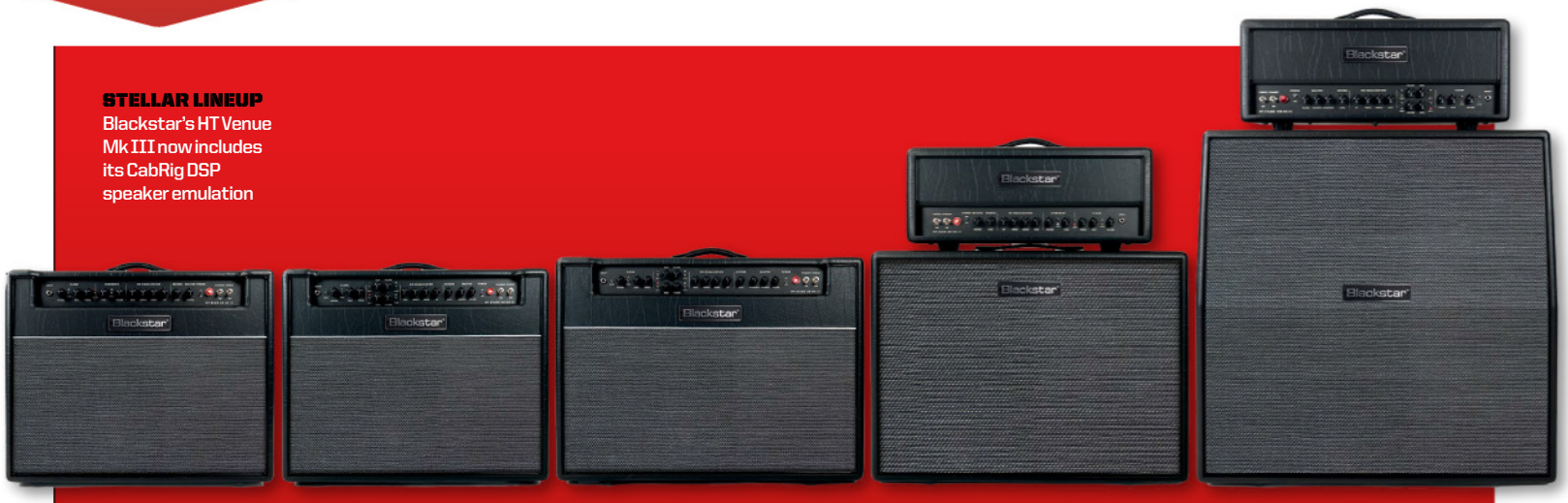
This album feels more positive, almost more hopeful, than your previous records.
It's definitely more melodic. That was always inside of me as a writer, but within the context of the band, it wasn't always necessarily appropriate. Now we're all a bit more grown-up, I'm able to just go for it. People sometimes confuse those cleaner sections as a '90s thing and I don't see it that way. They hear a good rock guitar sound and say, 'Oh, it's like the '90s!' But I'm like, 'No, it's just a good guitar sound!' I don't want to connect our stuff with being part of some sort of revival.

There's still a lot of clashing dyads and tritone stabs in the heavy parts, to be fair!
Those stabs are so percussive, evoking this sense of anger and hatred against the drums. I've been doing that since we were kids. I don't know where it came from but it will never leave my arsenal. And the tritone is called the devil's interval because back in medieval times people considered it to be pure evil. It's wild that when I was 10 years old, it created the same exact feelings in me even though I hadn't heard it before. The human body seems to just connect darkness with that interval – it's crazy!

You've used your EVH 5150III head along with various plug-ins over the years. What are we hearing on *The Above*?
It was definitely a mix-and-match recording process. I trusted my ears to go with what sounded best and ended up messing around with cabs and mics more than usual. I hadn't done much of that before. I ended up running my usual EVH head through a Marshall cab with Celestion Greenbacks. And I used a Fender Bassman for the more rock-sounding tones because it added a nice warmth to everything. There was a Roland Jazz Chorus for the clean parts on *Mirror* and *The Mask Of Sanity Slips*. I probably used plug-ins less this time, except for some atmospheric kinds of sounds that don't sound like guitar.

And how about instruments – was it still mainly your ESP Viper?
Yeah, plus a Strat with a Hot Rail in the bridge and my Reverend Charger. I just went with stuff that felt good in my hands. I don't want to go to a studio and say, 'Hey, what's your nicest guitar?' and use it for the record because that won't help me at all. That's not my vibe. I'd rather play a guitar that sounds a little shittier or isn't set up perfectly, but at least I know it inside out. And actually, sometimes bad gear can give you a good idea! I try not to overthink gear, I'll go with whatever's around. There are no rules. I'd encourage people to find their shit and live with whatever they can get their hands on. There shouldn't be pressure to find specifics.

Amit Sharma



STELLAR LINEUP
Blackstar's HT Venue Mk III now includes its CabRig DSP speaker emulation

REPRO AMPS

BLACKSTAR HT VENUE MK III

It's hard to believe that Blackstar's HT Venue range was first launched 14 years ago. Now, the UK valve fiend has updated the HT Venue for its third incarnation. As well as the expanded clean channel, foot-switchable voices and power reduction of the MKII, the big news is that the MKIII also includes Blackstar's CabRig DSP speaker/mic/room emulation – which works even when the amp is in standby mode – plus a four-channel USB audio interface. As well as this, the HT Venue now includes a new digital reverb circuit, and the livery has been given a boutique update. HT Venue amps are available in a number of formats, ranging from the Club 40 and Stage 60 112 combos, Stage 60 212 combo and Club 50/Stage 100 heads. Also, there are matching HTV-112, 212 and 412 cabs.

GUITARS

JACKSON VIRTUOSO

Jackson has unveiled the Virtuoso: a brand new model designed to give shredders a high-end, US-made slice of tone combined with ergonomics and top-flight playability. It starts with the alder body, complete with 'hand shake' heel carve. Next, there's a bolt-on multi-laminate, five-piece maple/caramelised maple neck. That's reinforced with graphite for complete stability, and capped with an ebony fingerboard featuring 24 frets, rolled edges, and a 12"-16" compound radius. Electronically, we get a classic Seymour Duncan 59/JB, neck/bridge pickup pairing, wired to a five-way switch and master volume/tone controls. Of course, there's a Floyd Rose (1500 series), and at the other end the Virtuoso is fitted with Gotoh MG-T tuners. It comes in a Jackson shell case, and is offered in Satin Shell Pink, Mystic Blue, Satin Black, and Specific Ocean.

PREAMPS

PICK A PEDAL
Each pedal captures the sound of a classic high-gain amp

TC ELECTRONIC AMPWORX HI-GAIN

If the onslaught of floor-based preamps is anything to go by, pedals are becoming the new amps. TC Electronic's latest release doesn't aim to do away with your power stage yet, but the Ampworx Hi-Gain does offer a complete front end for your tone. There are three flavours – Jim's 800, the V550 and the Dual Wreck (we'll let you figure out the inspiration!) – each based on a classic high-gain amp voice. All three feature dual channels, plus a foot-switchable and configurable pre/post boost circuit. There's a regular output as well as a cab-simulated DI output for going direct to a powered cab/PA/interface, or you can plug headphones in (also speaker-emulated). They're available now.

Debbie Gough of Heriot plays the American Series Virtuoso in Mystic Blue

VIRTUOSO PLAYED
AMERICAN MADE

Jackson
AMERICAN SERIES
VIRTUOSO

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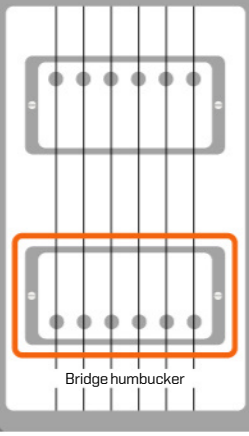
HOW TO

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN
- ✔ String bending
- ✔ Doublestops
- ✔ F major and minor

RIFF OF THE MONTH

GET THE TONE

CHANNEL DISTORTION



The tone is produced by the classic Slash combination of a Gibson Les Paul plugged into a Marshall JCM800, so dial in a smooth, rich sound with a moderate amount of gain. We've recorded our video demo in E standard so you can learn the solo without detuning, but if you want to play along with the original track you'll need to tune down one half step (E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭ B♭ E♭).

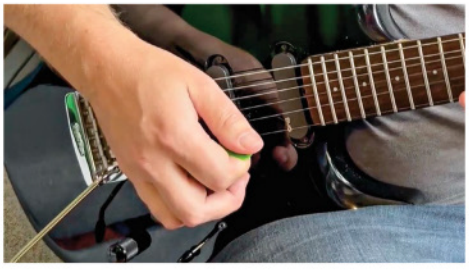
GUNS N' ROSES

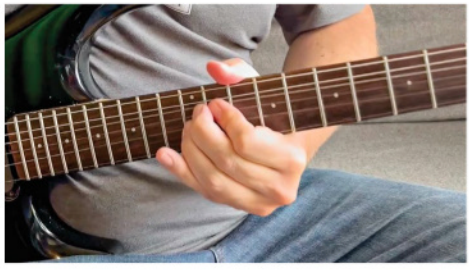
Perhaps

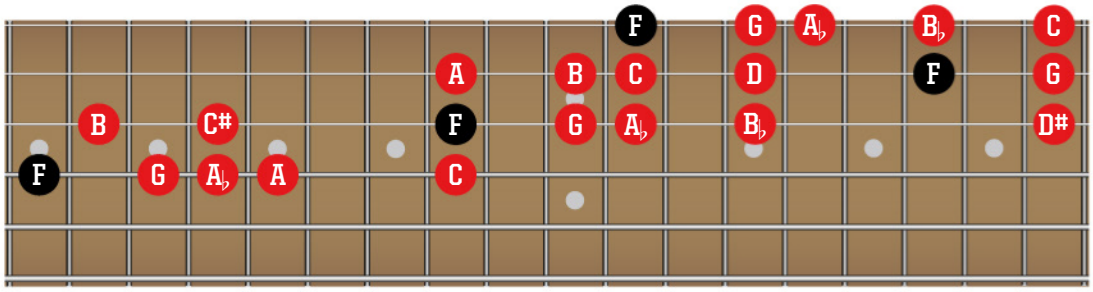
A new Guns n' Roses track is always a special occasion, so this month we break from our 'riff' mission to take a look at Slash's solo on the band's recent single *Perhaps*. To learn the solo, it makes sense to break it down into three four-bar sections. Play the first section with your first finger stationed at the 3rd fret and use your third finger to bend the G note up a full-tone bend, then a semitone bend to switch from the major to minor sound. For section two shift your first finger up to 10th fret and play doublestops on the second and third strings while adding slight bends and vibrato to the 12th fret notes. The final section climbs up the first string with bends from the 13th fret, up to the 18th fret, before finishing on a sustained doublestop at the 20th fret. We've played slowly through the solo in our video so you can check out the finer details.

CHEAT SHEET...

Appears at: 1:41–2:12
Tempo: 90bpm
Key/scale: F major/minor
Main techniques: Vibrato, bending, doublestops







The solo is based around an F root, but switches between major and minor tonalities roughly every two bars. The main scale is F major (F G A B♭ C D E). Slash usually plays the major 3rd A note by bending the G note up a tone, but on the minor chords he targets the A♭ note, which is the minor 3rd of F.

Photo Getty

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Words Ellie Rogers **Photos** Ebru Yildizmain / Melinda Oswandel

"I LIKE THE RAWNESS YOU GET FROM A CLEANER SOUND"

The power of **Baroness** comes from two guitarists with an unconventional approach to songwriting and gear. Lead player **Gina Gleason** reveals how it all works

When Gina Gleason joined Baroness as lead guitarist in 2017, she made the interesting transition from being a longtime fan to becoming an essential part of the band's creative machinery.

It was in 2012 that she heard the band's music for the first time. She laughs at the memory. "My brother showed me Baroness when the *Yellow & Green* album came out and he was like, 'I think I'm about to show you your new favourite band. It's a metal band but it's got a little more special sauce to it.'"

Five years later, a stroke of luck led to Gina joining the band. While she was working in Las Vegas as live guitarist for Cirque Du Soleil, an online pedal purchase from Philly Fuzz prompted an Instagram exchange with Baroness frontman John Baizley, who was at the time involved with the boutique pedal manufacturer. In turn, this led to a mammoth eight hour session of jamming and geeking out over the Germanium-based fuzz boxes together at Baizley's home in Philadelphia, not far from where Gina also grew up and would travel to visit her family. A friendship formed, and with none of the formality of an actual audition, Gina was soon drafted into the group.

But, along with her impeccable shreddy chops, she brought with her some light baggage regarding what it meant to suddenly be part of a band she'd so admired. "It's funny, when I joined, we toured a little bit and then started working on *Gold & Grey*, and it was really hard for me to strip away my own self-imposed ideas of what I thought Baroness should sound like," she reflects. "It took me some time to abandon that way of thinking. I had this realisation that whatever I think Baroness songs sound like, that's something that they've already done, so they were kind of ready to move on."

Now, as Baroness return with their self-produced sixth LP, *Stone*, Gina has more than established herself within the dynamic, her stunning lead performances on *Last Word* and *Beneath The Rose* and crushing riffage on *Anodyne*, *Shine* and *Under The Wheel* making for some of the album's standout moments. "It felt a little more natural this time," she explains. "I didn't have to second guess myself as much. I know these guys. We're friends. We've been on the road. So it just felt a little bit more free."

While devising music for the 10-track collection, the band worked remotely, recording demos in their respective creative spaces, before coming together over a weekly Zoom meeting to exchange "little nugget ideas" that would slowly be elaborated upon to become the twisty, turny masterpiece of modern metal that is *Stone*. "I think the less conventional song structures are a result of following these little breadcrumbs of ideas and things that inspire us," Gina suggests. "We do a lot of searching. It's not like, 'Okay, here's the song – everybody learn it!'"

Rather, if she or anyone else brought a riff or progression to the table, the Baroness method would be to "exhaust every option that could be done" with it. Not forgetting the mega jam sesh that spawned her musical partnership with Baizley in the first place, it's perhaps unsurprising that endurance is a big part of the creative process. "That's kind of how we work," Gina laughs, "for better or for worse!"

Naturally, exploring all sonic avenues also means extensive dabbling with pedals and effects. But, at the core of her sound, Gina has just a couple of essentials that she couldn't live without. "My favourite fuzz sound that I've found is the Philly Fuzz Infidel and I have a prototype version of it that my friend Steve [Strohm] made," she enthuses. "I put a little Xotic SP Compressor in front and I just compress the heck out of it. I like the sound of that really, really compressed fuzz, especially through a small amp."

In fact, if you listen to the absolute face-melter of a solo in *Last Word*, this is the exact combination you'll be hearing – that, and a fiery tsunami of hybrid-picking and legato licks that show off Gina's ability to pair sheer technical ability with seriously gutsy delivery. "I try to have an idea of what

the arrangement is going to be, or, at least, where the peaks and valleys are going to end up," she says of her well-considered soloing strategy. "But I'll always leave some space so that, when you have to go from point A to point B, something spontaneous can happen. Something that has helped me a lot with crafting leads is trying to get a really good comprehension on 'seeing' all of the chord shapes, so that when you're doing a lead, you can actually outline the chords in the progression," she explains, suggesting that if you're not "wrangled in" by some harmonic guidelines, it can be very easy to get lost in a world of noodling and end up shredding away without much intent or purpose.

Guitar-wise, her number one is a Fender American Professional Telecaster, equipped with V-Mod single coils and finished in Olympic White. "They've started making the American Pro IIs and I think they're trying to phase these out," she says, pointing to the much-loved guitar in question. "I have both, but this one is really special to me. The newer ones are definitely more 'pro'. The pickups are really well balanced and there's a push/pull for a coil tap type of thing. It's a really nice guitar, but the Pro I is a little scrappier."

Similarly, Baizley is a Fender fan and usually opts for a Jazzmaster, making for a guitar combo much more commonly seen in jangly indie bands than in a metal context. In the amp department, small speakers also make for mighty big sounds and many of the album's most foreboding tones were created by shoving an SM57 microphone right up close in the back of a dinky little Fender Champ.

As to how she and Baizley came to adopt such atypical tools for their genre, Gina explains: "We arrived there because, with the parts we're playing together, we're rarely ever doing the same thing at the same time, so there's a spread of voicings. If John's playing a powerchord down at the low end, I'll probably take a harmony of that or just take the fifth and do it as an octave somewhere else on the neck. We found that with a more saturated gain stage – with humbuckers and Marshall amps – we were just getting muddy and cancelling each other out. With the single coils, there's more space for us to each occupy our respective chord voicings or lead harmonies without stepping on each other."

Having previously rocked a Jackson DK1 during her pre-Baroness stint in Misstallica, an all-female tribute to California's thrash metal originators, Gina says now: "There are guitars we could play that would be a lot easier too. I think a more saturated sound is easier in some ways because you have more sustain to cover up some of the bumps in the road. But I like the rawness and the vulnerability you get from a cleaner sound. It makes what we do more present, more audible and I like having to work for it a little bit."

For those seeking to find muscular metal tones in the pedal shop, Gina has one final pearl of wisdom to consider: more gain or more distortion doesn't necessarily make something heavier. She says simply: "If you can find a sound that is inspiring to you and make it heavy with your own emotional weight or your own physicality, it'll stand out even more in a mix or band setting."

Stone is out now

SOLO STYLE
"I'll always leave some space so that something spontaneous can happen," Gina says

"WITH HUMBUCKERS AND MARSHALL AMPS WE WERE JUST GETTING MUDDY AND CANCELLING EACH OTHER OUT"
GINA GLEASON

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THE TRADE CENTRE WALES

Words Jonathan Horsley **Photos** Oliver Halfin

"REAL ROCK 'N' ROLL GETS YOUR HEART PUMPING!"

With their first album in more than a decade, **The Hives** are delivering high-speed thrills with a "kick-ass" guitar sound

Rock 'n' roll is an art form of myth and illusion. Of the latter you have that strange quirk of physics and biology whereby the more you turn up the volume, the faster it can feel. Of the former, well, pick your own favourite. The Hives, the biggest garage rock band in the world, and principally responsible for the revival of the garage sound at the turn of the 21st century, traffic in both. But it's myth that sets the scene for their long-awaited studio album, *The Death Of Randy Fitzsimmons*.

The identity of Randy Fitzsimmons has been the subject of conjecture since the start. His legend the shadow under which The Hives sound takes form. The story goes, he writes the songs, the band get to work and breathe life into the arrangements. Only Fitzsimmons was meant to be dead, hence The Hives' studio hiatus. Besides the occasional single, festival appearances, the band had laid low. Some outlets have named lead guitarist Nicklas Almqvist, aka Nicholaus Arson, as the real Fitzsimmons, but can anyone be so sure? He certainly doesn't volunteer that information when he joins us over Zoom, with rhythm guitarist Mikael Karlsson, aka Vigilante Carlstroem, patched in from his vacation after a hectic summer shaking stadiums in the company of the Arctic Monkeys and filling in dates with club shows. That they answer to aliases only deepens the mystery. This album, their first since 2012's *Lex Hives*, was constructed around the myth of Fitzsimmons' apparent death, and the story The Hives are sticking to is that they read his obituary in a local paper, visited his grave, dug it up, and instead of a pile of bones they found a set of songs, an album waiting to be made, and the stage wear to perform them in.

If their story checks out, you could call *The Death Of Randy Fitzsimmons* the world's first found footage rock 'n' roll album, Bo Diddley meets *The Blair Witch Project*. But really, once you press play on *Bogus Operandi*, the lead single that opens the record, it is business as usual. Down low, it sounds in the red, studio limiters creaking, electric guitar, drums and bass pushing everything. Crank it up and it sounds faster…

"We recorded through tape, and the tape was pushed quite a bit so it gets a lot of volume, going into the red on the tape," says Carlstroem. "It makes the guitar sound kick-ass." One of the performance-related benefits to tape comes from its limitations the fact that it is perishable, finite, and it isn't as cheap as it used to be. Whenever you roll it you better make it count. Carlstroem says they "pretty much always" track to tape at some point in the recording.

"I think it is way better on tape. Not everything is recorded on tape but at least us playing live in the studio is," he says. "When you record you are always more excited on the first take, and then maybe the same excitement on the second, but then it goes down. When you do it 10 times in a row you start missing something. That's the way it goes. Rehearse the song until it sounds good and then try and smash it down in one take. That's when I think we get the most exciting sound, and when we play it over and over again it gets more flat. I like the feeling of the first take."

Feeling is the word that keeps coming up. Rock 'n' roll is about myth and illusion but it is also about feel. It is about instinct. It is above all about being human. That rock 'n' roll works best when there's danger in the air is fundamentally human; it's us reckoning with our mortality. The only way to cheat death is to create a legend. Everything might be logged forever in the digital architecture that holds our lives together but achieving immortality is still something that requires storytelling and a sense of theatre, something that's a dying art in the information age. Whether theirs works for you or not, The Hives are nonetheless pursuing such legends. "If you can make a record that feels like you have invented rock 'n' roll or you have found the first rock 'n' roll album, that's a great feeling," says Arson.

To make this sort of sound you have to forget best practice and abandon the sort of precautions that are routinely applied in studio recording. On tracks such as *Crash Into The Weekend*, The Hives sound like they're all competing to be ahead of the beat. Keeping everything aligned on the grid is too antiseptic, too "safety first" for their sound. "That just makes it sound artificial, and uninteresting for the most part," says Arson. "For me, anyway."

"I am way behind, the bass player is a little in front," says Carlstroem. "That's the key to the song, I think. I'm lagging, Nicke is speeding up, and the bass player is on the beat."

"Yeah, that's probably true in 90 per cent of the time," adds

"WHEN YOU RECORD YOU ARE ALWAYS MORE EXCITED ON THE FIRST TAKE"
VIGILANTE CARLSTROEM

Arson. "But every once in a while you get someone going in with a good feeling of something and just rush and then you've got to tag along."

And yet it all functions as intended. Our ears make sense of it. The hooks are hard to quit. Riffs are easily digested. Another illusion The Hives specialise in is simplicity. Arson says their arrangements are anything but. All rock is math rock; you need to count. He says The Hives try to mix up the counts without the audience noticing. Why divide everything up into four? "That's something that we take a little bit of pride in, to find that arrangement that might be odd to some but sounds the most natural," he says.

"Some of The Hives songs are really complicated arrangements," adds Carlstroem. "But that's the trick, I think. It should sound simple."

There are lots of textures and sounds deepening the mix. Take a track like *The Way The Story Goes*, which has this *Twilight Zone* bizarro atmosphere, an after hours feel in a mix that's punctuated by hand claps, surf guitar with a generous lick of spring reverb, or *Two Kinds Of Trouble*, which comes from the Mutt Lange school of arrangements wherein big open spaces give drums some space to boom. *Smoke And Mirrors* has a Ramones quality in that it has a ballad's sentiment but is performed around 150bpm. "That started out as some sort of rockabilly pop song," says Arson. "The inspiration was [classic Ramones album] *End Of The Century*. We love the early stuff as well but the late Ramones stuff is very underrated."

Long-time Hives collaborator Pelle Gunderfelt engineered and mixed the record. Producer Patrik Berger can take some of the credit for how far The Hives stretched their sound without calling attention to it. Berger has worked with the likes of Charlie XCX and Lana Del Ray, and brings that box-office quality to the production. His punk background is just as important.

"You want someone to challenge you on the arrangements, on the songs," says Arson. "He comes from a slightly different school from us. He was in punk bands as well, bands sort of based on the first GG Allin records, but he was also in psychedelic bands. He has made pop hits as well. He has been all over the place, and we wanted someone with an eclectic taste in music to come in and challenge us."

It was Berger who suggested that they should use their live rigs in the studio, Fender amps pushing air through the grille cloth, Arson on his 1975 Telecaster Custom. Carlstroem invariably used a Fender Vibro-King, with a few effects in front when the song called for it. *Two Kinds Of Trouble* did, and deploys a gnarly gated fuzz. "I know what that is," he says. "That is a Fuzz Factory, and it's a Vibro-King, and a [Mad Professor] Deep Blue Delay." And the 1959 Epiphone Coronet that he has been his number one for over 20 years. You might have seen Carlstroem playing an Ivison Hurricane at Glastonbury. Ivison Guitars fixed up the Coronet after a headstock break. If and when Carlstroem finally kills it, it'll die hard. "I've been trying, hard, but it's still alive," he laughs.

So, too, is Randy Fitzsimmons, whoever, wherever he may be. The Keyser Söze of garage rock might elude us yet. Arson is happier theorising about the greatest trick that rock 'n' roll ever pulled – the one volume plays on the body and mind. Without that, you've got nothing. "If rock 'n' roll gets your heart pumping then that would be the sum of it, it feels faster," he says. "When you turn up the volume, it is supposed to sound wilder. That's always been important to us."

The Death Of Randy Fitzsimmons is out now.

HIVE MINDS
Nicholaus Arson (left) and Vigilante Carlstroem (below)

COVER FEATURE

The All-Star MASTERCLASS

Welcome to our huge All-Star Masterclass feature! This month we've recruited some of the world's finest players to help you improve your playing. Heading up this mammoth 40+ page extravaganza is a selection of video lessons from Cory Wong, Sophie Lloyd, Josh Middleton and more, plus a raft of bite-sized tips and bespoke advice from acts such as The Darkness, Iron Maiden, Philip Sayce, Guthrie Govan and, well, we'll let you discover the rest. Along the way, you'll find some 'play in the style of' tab examples that illustrate our star contributors' advice, so grab a guitar, follow the link shown here to navigate to the audio and video content, and let's get rocking!

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Words Amit Sharma **Photos** Gareth Parker

"We're trying to do the AC/DC version of a two-pronged attack!"

As **The Darkness** celebrate the 20th anniversary of their mega-hit album *Permission To Land*, Justin and Dan Hawkins discuss their unique chemistry as guitar-playing brothers in arms

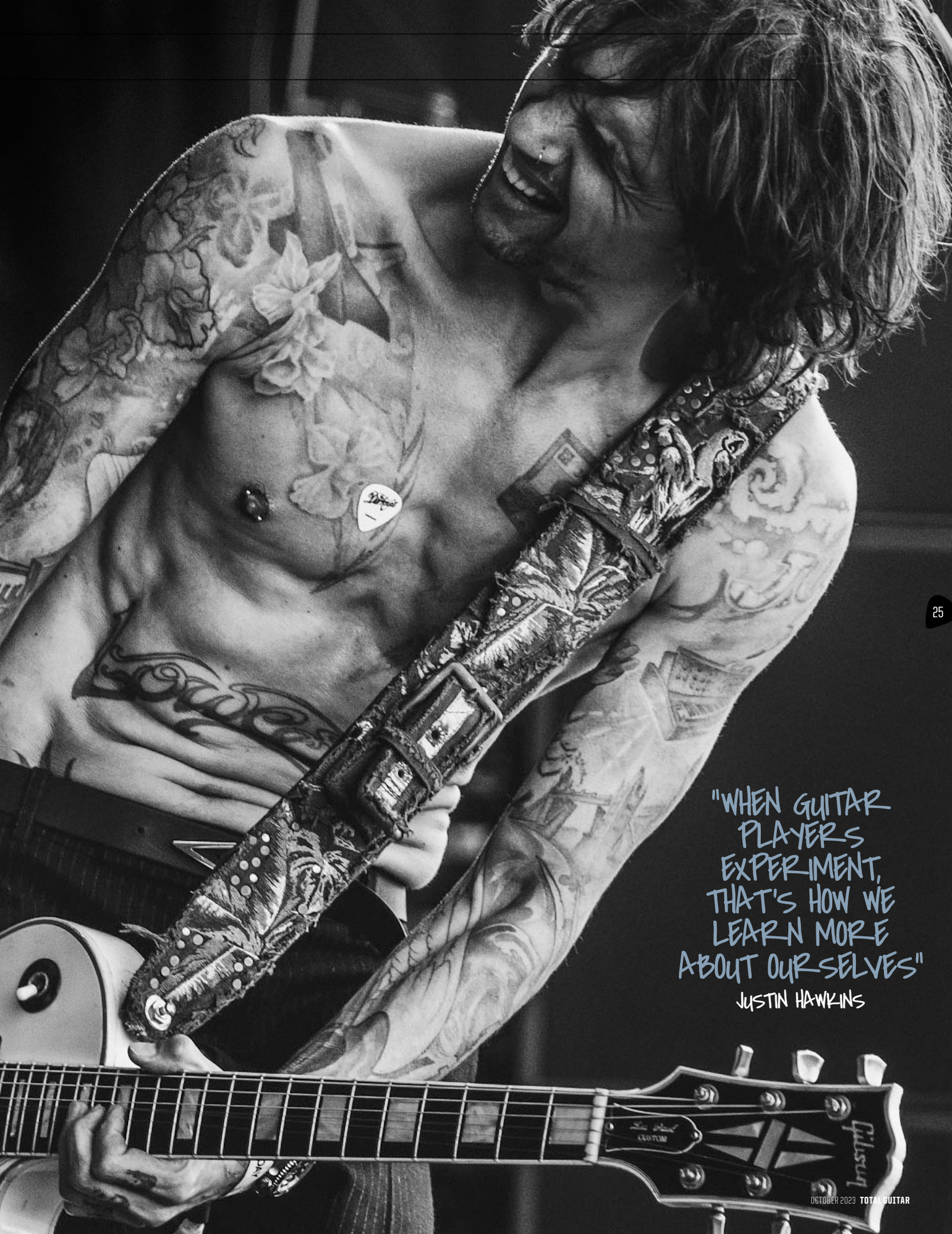
Every once in a while, a group will come out of nowhere and give rock music the good kick up the arse it desperately needs. In 2003, that band was called The Darkness, and it was their debut album *Permission To Land* that took the sound of Les Pauls and cranked Marshalls to the very top of the UK charts.

It is often said the greatest twin-guitar bands – from Thin Lizzy and AC/DC to Aerosmith and Guns N' Roses – boil down to the chemistry shared between both players, which is something The Darkness have always excelled at. On stage right, there's Dan Hawkins, the rhythmic engine and occasional soloist at the very heart of the noise. And centre stage is where you'll find his older brother Justin, the quartet's unflinchingly flamboyant singer/guitarist who is typically responsible for their more technical, Eddie Van Halen-inspired leads. With a newly expanded reissue of the album, *Permission To Land... Again*, released in October, the siblings join TG for a deep dive through the creative relationship and arena-conquering anthems that helped establish them as one of the most important British rock bands to emerge in the 21st century

When did it first become apparent you would have different roles when working together musically?

Justin: Dan and I played in our very first bands together. Dan was either the bass player or the drummer. I guess that would end up being [early band] Vital Signs. We often came as this guitarist and bassist combo. We started playing in a band called Fish Logic, who were already on the circuit and much more established at the time. We came as a pair of hired guns to help fill out the sound. The twin guitar thing didn't start happening until Empire, the band we were in before The Darkness. Dan was playing rhythmic lead guitar filling out all of the parts while I was on keyboards. Towards the end of Empire, I started playing guitar too. It was all about Dan in terms of the core and then in terms of the upper frequencies it was all about me. Wouldn't you agree with that, Dan?

Dan: Yeah! I wasn't a lead guitarist by any means. I was just the rhythm guy. I'd go wherever Justin led really. Because he was older and knew better musicians – and was also a better musician than me – twas ever thus! I'd follow him from one band to the next. Usually what would happen is someone would get fired and everyone would ask Justin, 'Do you know anyone?' and he'd say 'Well, my brother's pretty good!' I think I was given a week's notice to learn how to play bass for Vital Signs, I'd only played drums until that point. I've been blagging my way through ever since!



"WHEN GUITAR PLAYERS EXPERIMENT, THAT'S HOW WE LEARN MORE ABOUT OURSELVES"

JUSTIN HAWKINS

What's the secret to the best twin guitar bands, and which ones helped show you the way?

Justin: It's got to be AC/DC. They're the closest thing to what we're trying to achieve. Dan is the reliable driving force, the de-facto rhythm machine of the band… very much like Malcolm Young. When I try to play rhythm it's always very sloppy, but when we get it right, I think my sloppiness accents what Dan is playing. We're trying to do the AC/DC version of a two-pronged attack, especially when we play live. I think Guns N' Roses are a good example as well. People tend to overlook Izzy Stradlin's contributions to *Appetite For Destruction*, but if you listen to one speaker and hear what he's up to, it's his work that allows Slash to fly. Who else would you say, Dan? You're probably going to go with Thin Lizzy, aren't you?

Dan: Yeah! I'd say Lizzy and AC/DC are great examples of how we treat our lead movements. Because I'm not really a technical player by any means. In fact, I only know one scale and Justin taught me that when I was about nine. I never moved on!

Justin: It's the only one I know, too! I'd have shown you others, if I knew 'em…

You clearly have different skill sets. Is harmonising your leads ever a challenge?

Dan: When we're harmonising off the back of one of my solos, it normally sounds like Thin Lizzy and ABBA. And when I'm trying to harmonise with Justin's solos, you can literally hear me sweating! Especially on *Permission To Land*, it was a f*cking nightmare. To be honest, the first six years of my career in The Darkness was a nightmare because my G-string was a wound 22. So we'd do one of the solos where I have to join in and harmonise, for instance something like *Christmas Time (Don't Let The Bells End)*, and it would literally be slicing my fingers to pieces. Forget about moving an inch, that G-string wouldn't be moving a millimetre. Justin loves bending those strings all over the place!

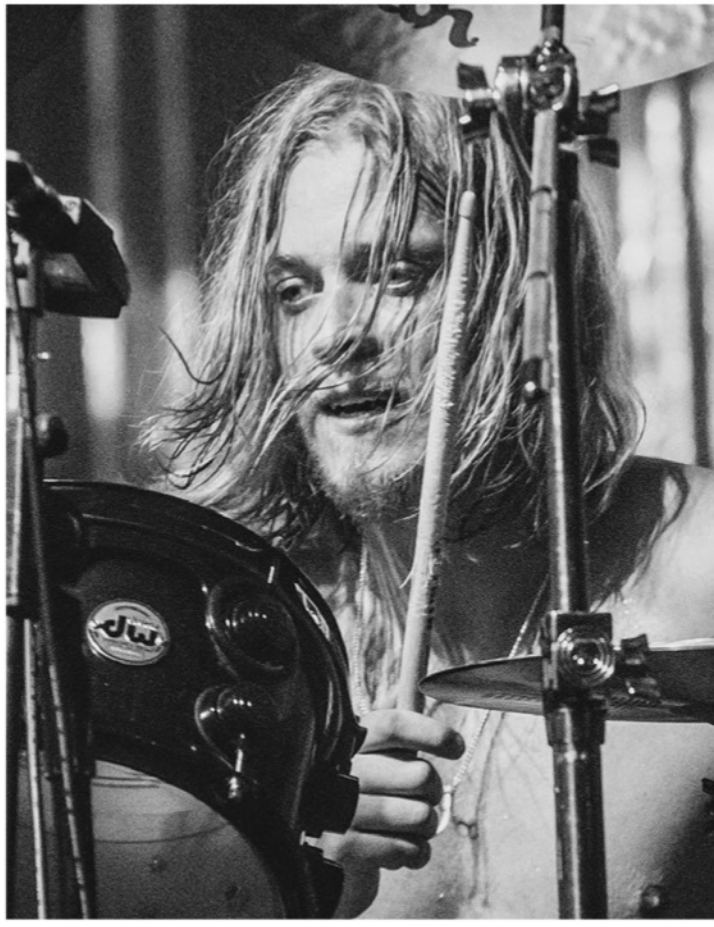
"WHEN I'M TRYING TO HARMONISE WITH JUSTIN'S SOLOS, YOU CAN LITERALLY HEAR ME SWEATING!"

DAN HAWKINS

Some of your most famous songs like *I Believe In A Thing Called Love*, *Love Is Only A Feeling* and *Givin' Up* involve trading solos – often with Dan starting. How exactly did that format develop?

Dan: We call it the 'Never mind that sh*t, here comes Mongo!' move! What happens is I'll start off with a nice melody, something that harks back to yesteryear. And inevitably my solo will run out of steam and then Justin will come in and salvage the piece by harmonising or start the proper guitar solo. That's how we do it!

Justin: Dan's stuff tends to be more melodic, especially when we're operating in the major keys like on *I Believe…* He ignores the humble blues scale that I showed him and avoids the obvious pentatonic stuff. The main solo starts off with a unison idea on the root



and then he starts doing the full descending scale with the major seventh and everything in there. It's posh stuff! Then, at the end, I think it's still in E major but I start doing bluesy stuff that belongs more in E minor. That's something Prince used to do a lot. He'd play a solo using the full major scale and then sauce it up with something minor pentatonic stuff afterwards. When you want to put some sauce on your solo, you need the nice bit to put your sauce on top of!

It's a very yin and yang kind of relationship, in that sense.

Justin: I would say so. Or maybe even fire and ice? But who is fire and who is ice?

Dan: I'm ice and you're fire. You're bring the raunchiness! The only time I'll take a solo is when I've got a melody in my head, something that helps add to the emotion of the thing. If it makes sense to my ears, then I will put my hand up. And then sometimes I will think, 'Oh no, I can't really solo in this key!' But if I hear something, I will stick my hand up and say, 'Yes, I will take this section of the song!'

Dan, on stage it's always you who does the Jimmy Page-esque lead on *Get Your Hands Off My Woman*, pulling off on the G and D-strings. Who played it on the recording?

Justin: That's Dan! He's always pulling off his G-string!

Dan: That's my special move and also the name of my autobiography, which comes with a free pair of pants if you preorder… used, of course! There are some songs we know Justin won't want to be handed a guitar for when we play live. That was definitely one of them. So I figured I'd just do something to get us through…

Well, it's always a high point in any live set – especially while Justin is doing his scissor kick handstand!

Justin: I think Dan tends to play down his lead chops a bit. Sometimes when he takes a solo he won't restrict himself to any certain scale. He'll go on these sonic meanderings that leave me scratching my head wondering why he chose those notes. He does things that I can't imagine doing. We're both really set in our ways in that sense. But when guitar players go off and experiment, that's how we learn more about ourselves, and Dan's really good at that.

HIGH VOLTAGE! The Darkness on stage this summer. Top left: Dan Hawkins and bassist Frankie Poullain. Bottom left: drummer Rufus Taylor. Above: Justin Hawkins rides again!

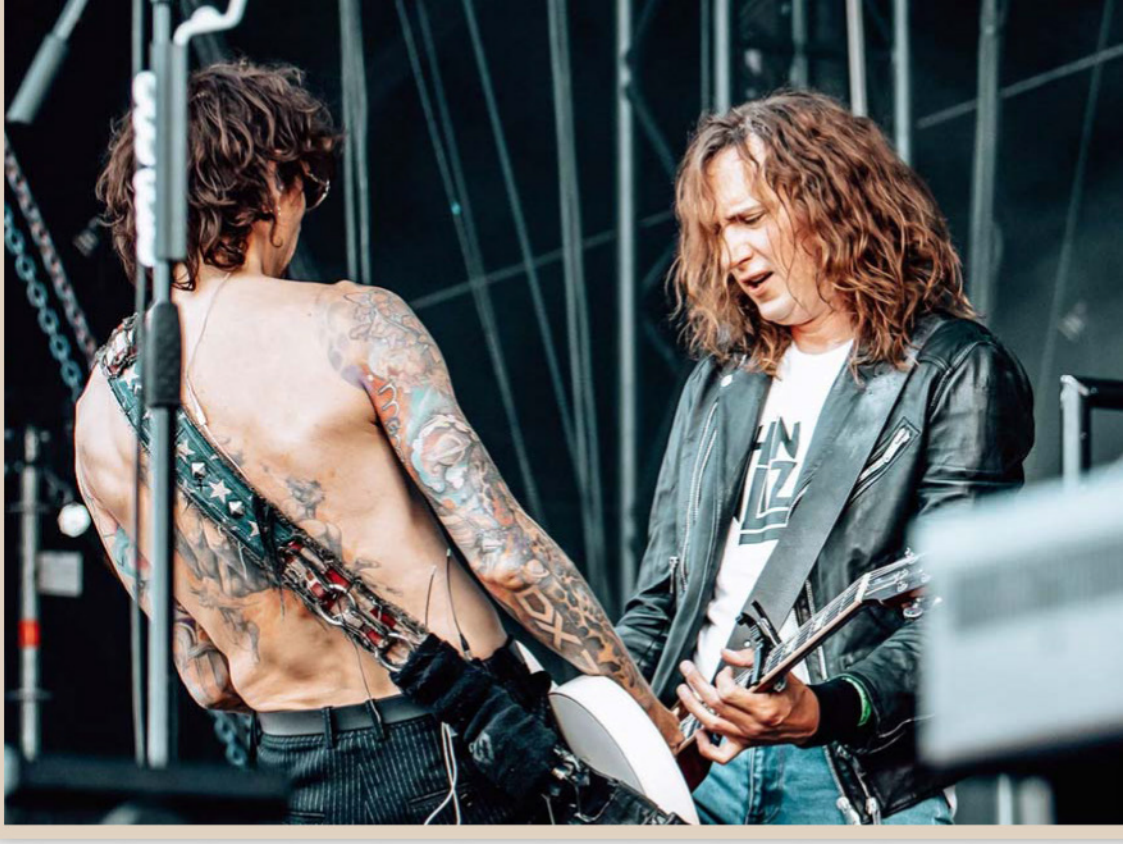
Sometimes he'll do the solo on the demo just because he's got a guitar in his hands. Oftentimes, I'll listen to that and think, 'Okay, that's definitely going to be the solo because it's f*cking awesome!' He makes some weird choices. Sometimes you'll only get the freedom to do that when you think it won't be you doing the solo in the end. So Dan has this knack for stumbling on stuff that makes me think, 'That's going to be it!' because it's all I want to hear on that song.

Another thing that sets you apart is your use of delays. Dan, on tracks like *Love Is Only A Feeling*, *Open Fire* and *Motorheart* you've used the kind of heavy echo that comes from going into an amp's front end…

Dan: Do you know where that's from? Back in the day, with the various bands in London that I was in, there was one Space Echo that got lent around and given to whoever wanted to use it for that week. I completely fell in love with the sound. With a Space Echo you have to go into the front end. It's part of the sound – what happens to your guitar before the amp because of the preamp inside it. That's why I ended up using that sound a lot. More recently, I have been sticking things in the loop as well, but I still like some delays in the front because it's part of that Route One sound where the delays are distorting as well.

So what do you remember about the gear used on *Permission To Land*?

Justin: We were both using Les Paul Standards for that first album, actually. Dan was on Dune, which is his number one Les Paul, and I wasn't using a Custom – I was playing the Black



Shuck, which is a black Standard.

Dan: There were two phases of recording. For the first one, I was using a 1987x 50-watt Marshall head that our manager bought. I used it for a lot of my parts. It was my first valve amp and I've still got it because it sounds so awesome. I absolutely love it. Later on, we basically inherited a bunch of '90s 100-Watt 1959 Super Leads. So the other half of the album was recorded using those. I think we inherited those amps from The Verve, funnily enough, and I've still got a couple of them. They're particularly aggressive sounding compared to the other Super Leads I've owned over the years. The one we used is still in my studio. Every time I plug it in, it just roars and sounds really in your face. I don't know why… maybe it's broken? That's probably what most people are hearing when they think of the rhythm guitar tones. We took it out to Chapel Studios, so it got used on *Black Shuck*, *Givin' Up*, *Get Your Hands Off My Woman* and *Love On The Rocks With No Ice*. It was just dialled in right. We didn't use any pedals or anything for most of the rhythm sounds.

Many would say the tone at the beginning of *Black Shuck* is the very epitome of a classic rock guitar sound…

Justin: The interesting thing about *Black Shuck* is that the main rhythms, what you hear Dan playing for the intro, was actually my old Ampeg Dan Armstrong from 1969. It wasn't a Les Paul on that beginning bit. For my sound I used Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifiers, because I endorsed them from pretty early on. Oh, and Tom Jennings, the Australian actor and musician, lent us this weird thing that let you change the valves in a head to change the sound. It came with a selection of valves that you could pop in to get different tones. Do you remember that, Dan?

> "DAN IS THE RELIABLE DRIVING FORCE, THE DE-FACTO RHYTHM MACHINE OF THE BAND"
>
> JUSTIN HAWKINS

Dan: I think it was made by THD? And yeah, you could basically hot swap the preamp stage and go between a Marshall or a Vox AC30 and so forth. It was a pretty unusual thing.

Another fan favourite, *Love On The Rocks With No Ice*, has a riff that sounds easy but is a lot harder in practice. How did that come about?

Justin: That main riff kinda evolves through the track. When it gets to Dan's solo, we started adding passing runs within it. And I've started evolving it even further live, but I don't know if Dan's ever noticed because his amp is so loud he can't hear anything else! I've started doing this really nasty skanky thing using these Jimmy Pagey kind of major third chords… it changes and then breaks down into some kind of reggae. Whenever I do it, I look over to our tech Ian 'Softy' Norfolk and he's just shaking his head, looking despairingly at me.

Justin has been using a Charvel more in recent years. Does that help create some further separation between the two of you?

Dan: I'm a massive snob when it comes to things that aren't Gibson, basically. Or really special and vintage. But that Charvel holds its own and sounds f*cking awesome. I can't believe how much bottom end it has, it's ridiculous.

Justin: What I like most about that Charvel is that you can do divebombs on it! That's always fun. And it's really good for slide guitar, maybe it has higher action or something. I think it has some Eddie Van Halen electronics in it. There's some clever stuff happening in there, which is a big part of its overall sound!

SIBLING RIFFERY
"I'm the ice," Dan says. "He's the fire."

Looking back on your career so far, which songs are you most proud of in terms of capturing your chemistry best? *Live 'Til I Die*, *Dinner Lady Arms* and *Rock And Roll Deserves To Die* are great examples of using twin guitars to create a very full-sounding wide spread…

Justin: There are a lot of layers on *Rock And Roll Deserves To Die*, but it was actually all Dan in the studio. I just did the rock 'n' roll solo and Strat stuff at the end.

Dan: The lead work you did on that is some of your best, actually! It was a Les Paul through an AC30 with a Tube Screamer in front. It ended up sounding really Billy Corgan-esque. I was in full 'track the hell out of it' mode on that song via rhythms and mandolins. It came out pretty epic! I'm particularly fond of songs like *Givin' Up* and *Stuck In A Rut* from the first album. My job seems to be setting the scene and then Justin comes in and sticks the boot in with a face-melter! I sort of switch the gas on and then Justin ignites it. Then he sticks his head in the oven and we all start slamming it!

***Permission To Land… Again* is out on October 6.**

Words, guitars and backing Jon Bishop

SEE THE LIGHT

Get inside the playing styles of the Darkness guitar duo, Justin and Dan Hawkins

It's fair to say that The Darkness' 2002 debut *Permission To Land*, played a major part in a rebirth of the pomp and bombast of '70s and '80s arena rock and metal. At the heart of the band are Justin and Dan Hawkins, the Les Paul-toting guitar duo evoking the spirit of acts such as Queen, AC/DC *et al*. But you know all that! What we're looking at here is the guitar techniques the pair employ.

Like almost any hard rock act, powerchords are at the heart of the rhythm parts – no surprises there. Harmonised licks and pentatonics are key to their solos, with fiery Jimmy Page-esque delivery.

Aping their heroes Chuck Berry and Angus Young, the Darkness boys take rock 'n' roll phrasing and turbocharge it, evoking the sounds of players like Brian May and Eddie Van Halen. As you tackle our tab examples try to remember that you're aiming to strike a balance of glam campness and hard rock attitude.

1 POWERCHORD RIFFING

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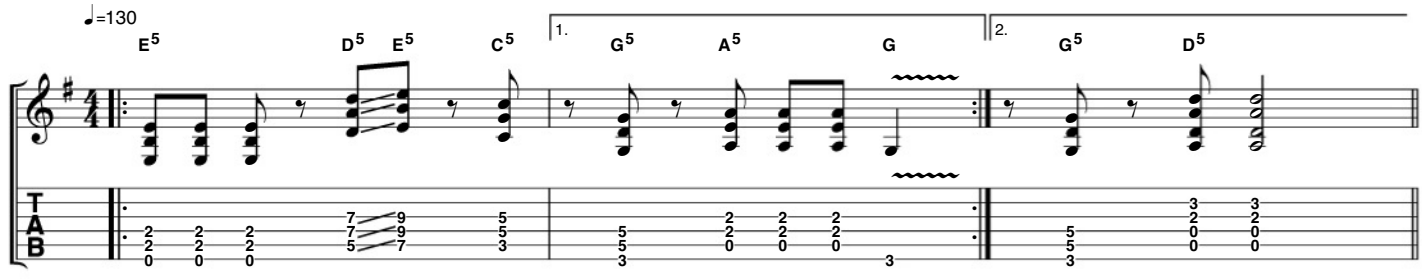

Classic rock-style riffs are the backbone of The Darkness sound, and our example is inspired by songs like *Get Your Hands Off My Woman* and *I Believe In A Thing Called Love*. This riff uses tried and tested powerchord shapes and will sound most authentic with a bridge humbucker, medium overdrive tone and exclusive use of downpicking.

2 REPEATING PHRASE SOLOING

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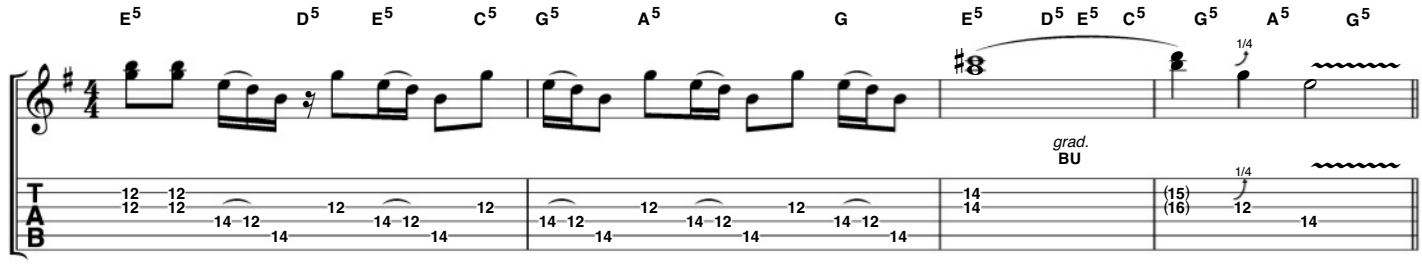

Our second example uses a Darkness-style riff as a backdrop for some lead soloing. For this one, we're using the E minor pentatonic scale to create a repeating four-note pattern. The fast pull-off from the 14th fret to the 12th on the fourth string is the key to a smooth delivery.

3 OPEN-STRING PEDAL TONES TREMOLO PICKING

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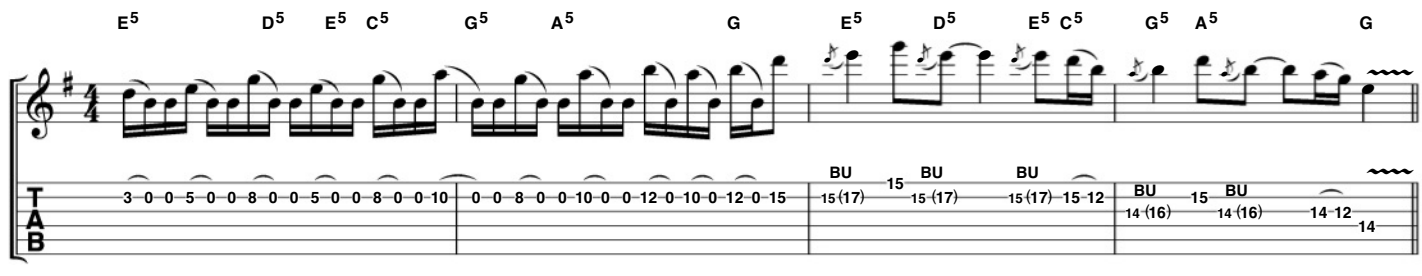


Our third example showcases some high-octane lead work and is inspired, once again, by *I Believe In A Thing Called Love*. Here the open second string acts as a pedal tone and notes of the E minor pentatonic scale are played up the string. We've employed fast tremolo picking and to keep the tab as simple as possible, we've notated the basic rhythmic. You can experiment with how fast to pick, but generally the faster the better!

Words Amit Sharma

"THE MOTOR IS ALWAYS GOING!"

The rules of funk guitar. By **Cory Wong**

As one of the most respected players working in funk right now, Cory Wong is widely regarded as the Nile Rodgers for the next generation. Ahead of his UK tour in October, he explains how to make sure you stay right in that pocket and reveals the chords that can get you through any musical scenario…

Your right hand is often described as a motor – always ticking along even in between the notes you play...

"What I noticed early on is that a lot of things feel easier when all the downstrokes are on the beat or on an 'and'. And all the 'e' and 'a' notes are played using an upstroke. If I live by that philosophy, that means my right hand is just pulsing 16th notes the whole time. I'm just deciding what to hit the strings, which strings to hit, how many notes I'm actually fretting or whether to just play scratches. I never have to think about strumming patterns – it's all taken care of because the motor is always going. And even if the rhythm has a lot of pauses and rests, it sounds less jerky because my internal subdivision is always ticking. If my brain is counting every 16th note and I'm only playing eighth notes, I will play tighter."

Because there's less margin for error...

"Exactly. Players who are only thinking in eighth notes might have more leeway to speed up or drag, because there's more space between eighth notes. Give yourself twice the amount of precision. I always try to think of one subdivision deeper."

Another part of your playing is how you hint at chords instead of playing every note...

"That's something I've learned from people like Nile Rodgers. He won't play the full chord, even though he's got the full Emin7 grip on his left hand. That way, even if he hits more strings than he planned to, it's always going to be the right note. But he generally focuses on picking only the upper few strings. Prince did that a lot and he's my favourite rhythm guitarist. The idea is to give only the amount of information that's needed from you."

Which is one huge difference between a funk ensemble and a rock power trio, right?

"Yup. In a lot of bands I play with, there might be keyboard players, plus a horn section, maybe even another guitarist. All of a sudden there's a lot of information happening in a lot of different ranges which can interfere with each other. If we're just jamming on a C7, I might just play a root and a flat seven – like the C on the first fret of the second string and the B♭ on the third fret of the third string. I'll do that instead of the whole shape. On its own it can sound like a weird, clashing two-note thing. But in the context of a big band and wider arrangement, it suddenly sounds really cool. The dissonance is what makes it interesting, people will go, 'Oh, what's that?!'. When I first started out playing rock music in trios, I was responsible for taking up space – that's the point of it. But in a funk band, you don't need all that pressure on yourself. The role is different."

That lets listeners fill in the blanks themselves, too...

"I could give away more information, but it's cooler – especially with instrumental music – to let the listener interpret it for themselves. Leaving space invites the listener into the music. You can make the listener a part of your song and they will connect to it even more if they're allowed to use their own creativity and imagination in the song. A perfect example is the interval of a tenth on guitar, it sounds so cool and interesting. Just listen to a song like (The Beatles') *Blackbird*, which is a root and a third but the third is up an octave. They are far enough apart for your ears to almost hear the notes in between! Our minds fill in the blanks."

Your chord knowledge is extensive. Which ones do you find yourself using most?

"There are three realms of chords for me. Think of it as three trees: major, minor and dominant, and each one has three branches. So in G the major tree will have Gmaj7, G6 and Gmaj9. Those are the ones I play the most. For minor, I have Gm7, Gm6 and Gm9. To me, Gm7 is the classic Nile chord and all you have to do is play a regular fifth-string rooted minor chord and take your pinky off. With dominant, I mainly think about G7, G9 and G13, though I also like G7♯11 and G9♯11 because they sound interesting. If you learn these chord shapes, there's a lot of mileage right there. One thing I got hip to later on is sus chords like Gsus9. It's funny, in Vulfpeck we always call it the 'classic' because you hear it in Earth, Wind & Fire, Michael Jackson and D'Angelo. It's a very piano-like voicing that you won't find in a lot of guitar books but I use it all the time!"

Cory Wong tours the UK in October. His solo album* Lucky One *is out now.

"LEAVING SPACE INVITES THE LISTENER INTO THE MUSIC"

Transcription: Charlie Griffiths

CORY WONG: VIDEO LESSON

Cory's mission is to write lead rhythm guitar. Here he shows you how, with the aid of staple funk techniques and a boatload of creativity

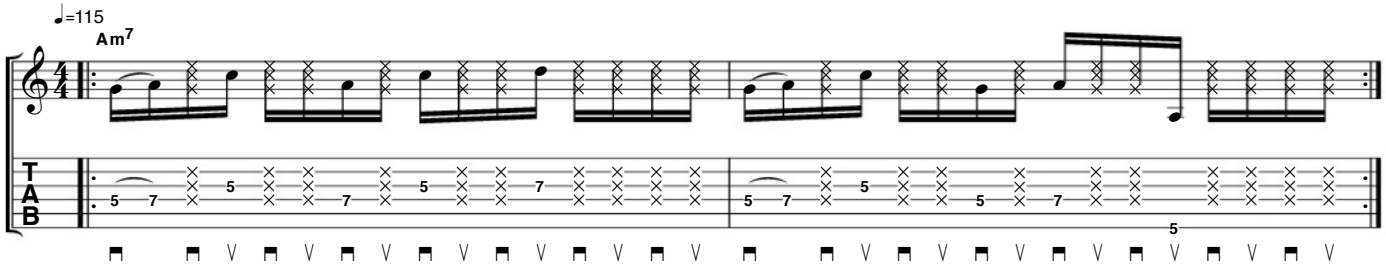
As a major player in the world of funk, Cory Wong tasks himself with placing his considerable rhythm guitar skills centre stage – something he calls "lead rhythm guitar". The result? Well, he delivers some of the finest, slickest and most creative funk playing you'll hear today. And getting to that level? It takes a certain amount of creativity, and the idea is to go beyond basic chord vamps and inject something "signature" or "iconic," some musical ideas of your own.

Here, the Minneapolis maestro takes us through some of the ways he approaches jamming around simple chords – and that's something we could all brush up on! Using just a couple of well-known barre chord shapes, Cory outlines some creative ways to take your rhythm and phrasing to the next level.

Click on the link to watch the video and follow the tab below.

1 SINGLE-NOTE CHORD OUTLINE

bit.ly/tg376audio



Cory kicks off with a look at how a single-note funk line can outline a chord (Am7 here). He keeps a 16th-note rhythm going, with the strumming determined by the "right hand motor staying steady." Listen out for muted notes (shown with Xs in the tab). Cory plays first with, then without mutes – and you can hear how sparse it is when you boil it down to just the notes. There's no right or wrong though. Make your own parts as sparse or energetic as you like!

2 CHORD OUTLINE WITH DIADS

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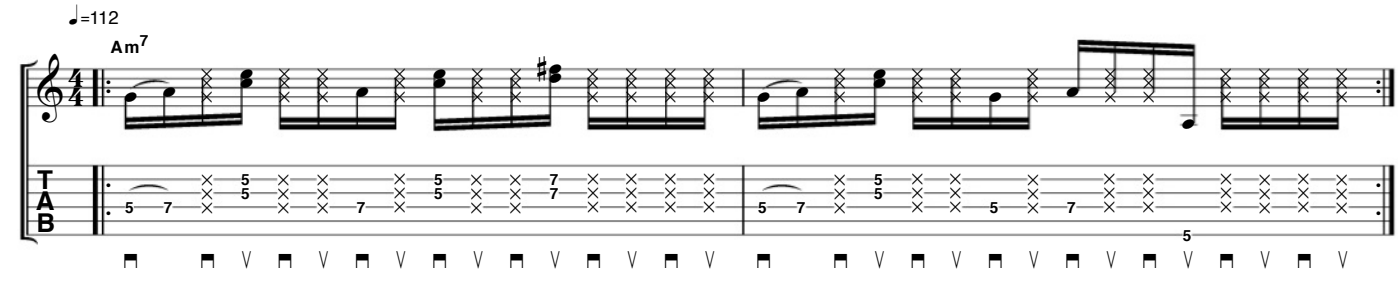

Here, Cory expands his idea by adding notes from the chord, but notice that these are just two-note shapes – no big chords to be found! But it does sound richer and more colourful, and it's a creative idea you can employ in your own funk rhythms, or any other style for that matter. Take a look at Cory's fingers in our video. You'll see he's often spreading them fairly flat across the fretboard, muting out the idle strings so he can strum confidently.

3 CHORD OUTLINE WITH TRIADS

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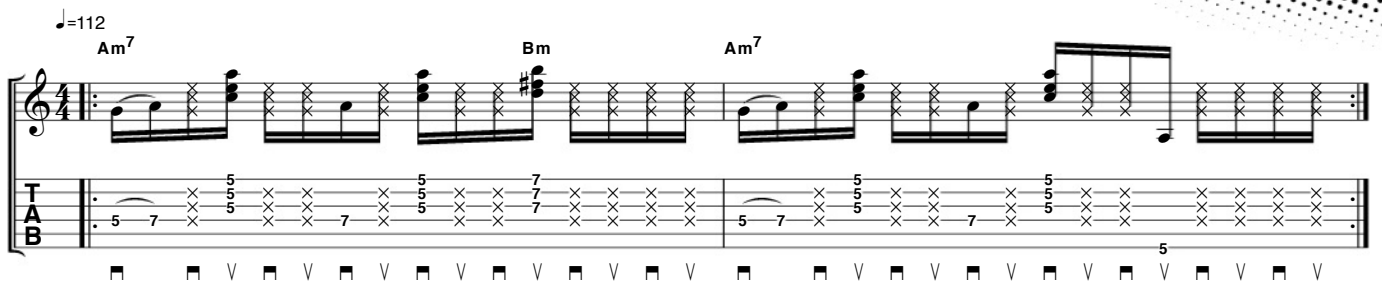

Taking the idea one step further, Cory adds another string on top of the two-note shapes, which again changes the sound, and you can hear our funk maestro accenting those chords as he strums. And, as he mentions, the notes are, by and large, from an Am7 chord and the A minor pentatonic scale (which are near identical, notes-wise). If you happen to know the scale and the chord then you have a starting point to take Cory's ideas further.

4 HARMONISED MAJOR PENTATONIC SCALE

bit.ly/tg376audio

Here, Cory demonstrates how he plays the pentatonic scale lick using two notes at a time in songs like *Julia*. Note that he prefers the vibe of downstrokes and palm-muting.

5 HARMONISED MAJOR PENTATONIC SCALE 2

bit.ly/tg376audio

A development on the previous idea. As Cory says, "It sounds interesting, but really, it's quite easy. You're just outlining a pentatonic scale, but you're playing two notes at the same time."

6 DOMINANT CHORD VAMP

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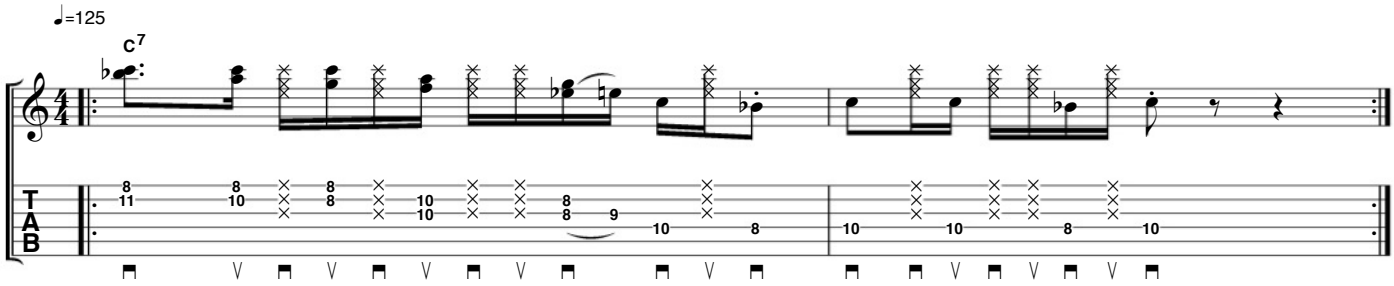

Listen out for Cory's quick blast with a straight-strummed C7 chord. We've not tabbed it here because he's talking about how to go beyond the basics of what is essentially just a strummed chord. The riff he plays here outlines the C7 chord but with much more going on. Cory plays the most important notes from the C7, plus a few more for added colour, and not forgetting the ever-present string muting for musical punctuation and groove.

7 DOWN THE OCTAVE

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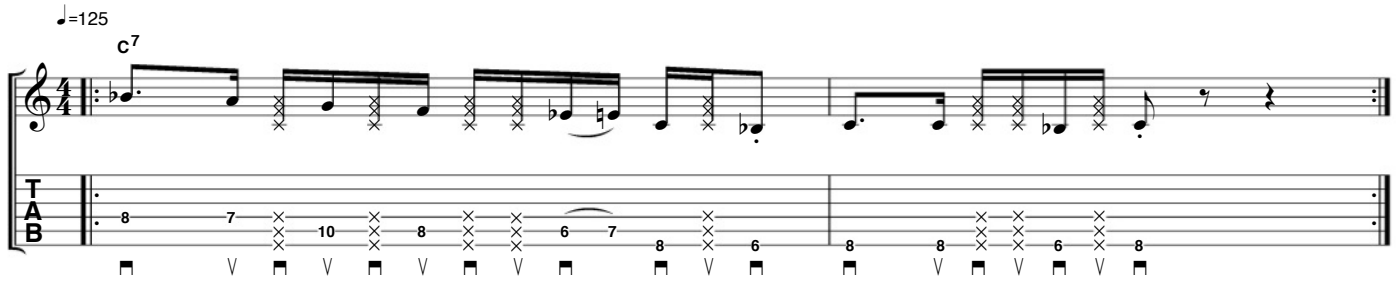


A similar idea to the previous riff here, but thanks to being in a lower octave there's a different feel. As Cory says, what's important with a lick like this is that it's memorable and singable – and these two riffs certainly deliver. Go back and listen to his first jam on the C7 chord and you'll get the idea!

Words Amit Sharma Photo Sam Cahill

"I'M MAKING SURE EVERY NOTE IS RIGHT ON THE BEAT"

How to play with speed, cleanliness and accuracy. By **Sophie Lloyd**

It's been a whirlwind year for British guitar sensation Sophie Lloyd, who went from being one of the most prominent players online to performing in arenas with Machine Gun Kelly as well as releasing her own music with guest appearances from members of Trivium and Steel Panther. Here she shares some of the most valuable knowledge she's picked up along the way…

In the past you've said legato feels like your strong point. How did you develop that fret hand finger strength?

"I bought one of those Gripmaster hand exercisers when I was a kid and thought I was so cool on the school bus doing all my squeezes. I don't think it made any difference to my playing! There's no replacement for picking up a guitar, feeling those strings under your fingers and building your calluses. It's also really important to build the strength of each finger, because a lot of players might feel great about hammering on and pulling off between their first and middle fingers, but less confident about doing the same with their middle finger and pinky."

So you must have spent a lot of time working on different trills using each of your fingers?

"Yeah! It's really good to work on fast trills going from your middle or fourth finger to your pinky, because there are more weak links in that part of the hand. I always use my little finger in legato runs, so it's very valuable to me. There are some players who only use three fingers and I feel like they're missing out on a massive part of their potential by neglecting the pinky."

How exactly do you plan ahead for practice? Is there a routine?

"My old teacher used to say practice is like a triangle – one side is speed, the other is cleanliness and the other is accuracy. And whenever you're learning, you need to focus on two of those and ignore the other. For example, if you're practising with a metronome, you're probably going to start off slower. In those situations you are sacrificing speed for cleanliness and accuracy. It's always important to get your muting technique down at this stage, whether that's using your fretting hand fingers to cover unused strings or your picking hand, or both! You might find yourself lifting parts of your hand to only cover a few strings at a time and then also using the side of your picking hand palm to mute other ones. Once you have those down, you can start practising up to speed and keeping the accuracy, maybe sacrificing a little bit of cleanliness to begin with because you can build on that more once your speed is up. At the end, you have to add it all together to complete the triangle!"

What kind of warm-ups might you do before filming or performing?

"There are a few, like the classic chromatic climbing run playing four notes in succession on every string and then going up a fret. That really helps with both my alternate picking and legato, because I'm making sure every note is right on the beat. There's a whole-tone lick I've been practising a lot too – basically playing three notes per string, each one a tone apart and then starting a fret up on the next string. So if you're in A, that would be the 5th, 7th and 9th frets of the low E and then moving to the 6th, 8th and 10th frets of the next string and so on. Me and the other guitarist in Machine Gun Kelly's band [Justin Lyons] are always doing that backstage to warm up and see who can do it faster! Another thing I like to do is the Joe Satriani warm-up where you play chords that are one fret apart on the higher strings and then invert them every time you change. That's a good one for waking up the fingers!"

You use a lot of two-handed ideas. How does one develop left and right hand synchronicity?

"I separate my two hands so both have a fixed position. For example, I might be playing a A minor pentatonic line with my fretting hand based on the 5th fret but start each string with a tapped note an octave up on the 17th fret. It sounds really cool when you do things like that because of the wide intervals.

"Or you might do the same thing with your fretting hand but spell out position four of the minor pentatonic with your other hand, tapping notes like the 15th fret of the high E string, the 17th and 15th of the B string, the 17th and 14th of the G and so on. All you're doing there is playing the minor pentatonic but using both hands to play it in different positions on the neck.

"If it feels hard, try to get used to playing on one string with the tapped note changing every time, and it will soon feel quite seamless. Once you get the hang of that, you can train your brain to do similar things with the major and minor scales."

"SOME PLAYERS ARE MISSING OUT BY NEGLECTING THE PINKY"

VIDEO GUEST LESSON!
BIT.LY/TG376AUDIO

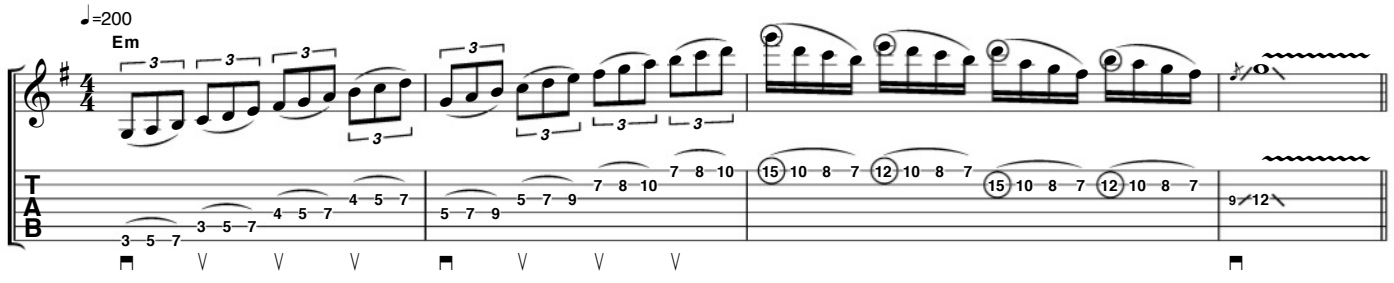
SOPHIE LLOYD MELODIC ROCK SOLOING

Get to grips with a raft of essential techniques to take your solos to the next level

Sophie's stock in trade is a blend of shred and melodic rock and here she takes you through some licks that you can employ in your own solos. First up is a three-note-per-string idea. It takes practice to develop the dexterity to play them well, but once you've made progress it's a shortcut to speedy soloing. And you can always practise higher up the neck if Sophie's stretches in G are a bit much.

Moving on, Sophie outlines a cool lick using 5th intervals. It's a clever take on a simple idea – the 5th is the powerchord interval, remember. Next is Sophie's take on easy sweep picking. It's a challenging technique but follow Sophie's three-string shape and see how far you get. Sophie follows this with a pentatonic idea that, with a little creativity, could be applied in blues just as easily as hard rock. Finally, Sophie wraps up with a shred lick that combines pick- and fret-hand tapping.

01 MELODIC THREE-NOTE-PER-STRING LICK bit.ly/tg376audio



Here, Sophie outlines the benefits of learning a three-note-per-string lick in a melodic rock context. As she explains, "it allows you to go up and down very quickly and efficiently, while also going diagonally across the fretboard, so you can cover a lot of ground." A tapped lick follows the three-note phrase. Practise bite-sized phrases.

Transcription Charlie Griffiths **Photo** Getty

02 STACKED 5THS LICK

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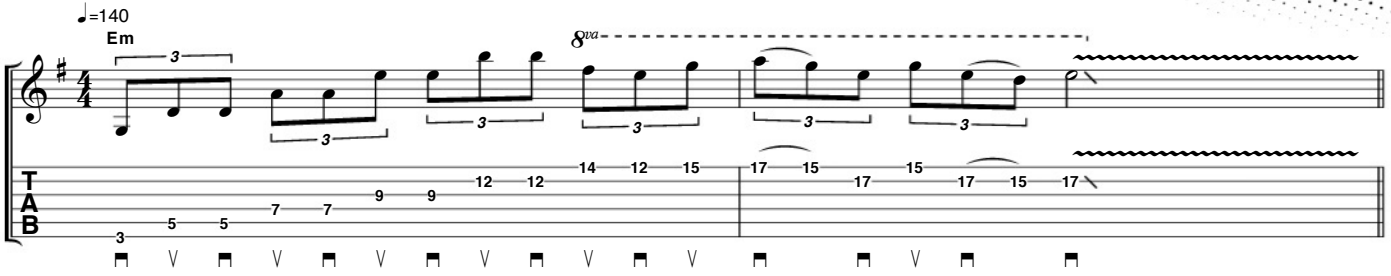

You know what a 5th is, right? It's the interval between the two notes in a powerchord. Easy! Here, Sophie takes this idea, but, instead of playing powerchords, she creates a cool rock lick. It's quite simple but the position shifts come thick and fast, so be sure to practise those moves slowly first.

03 EASY SWEEP PICKING

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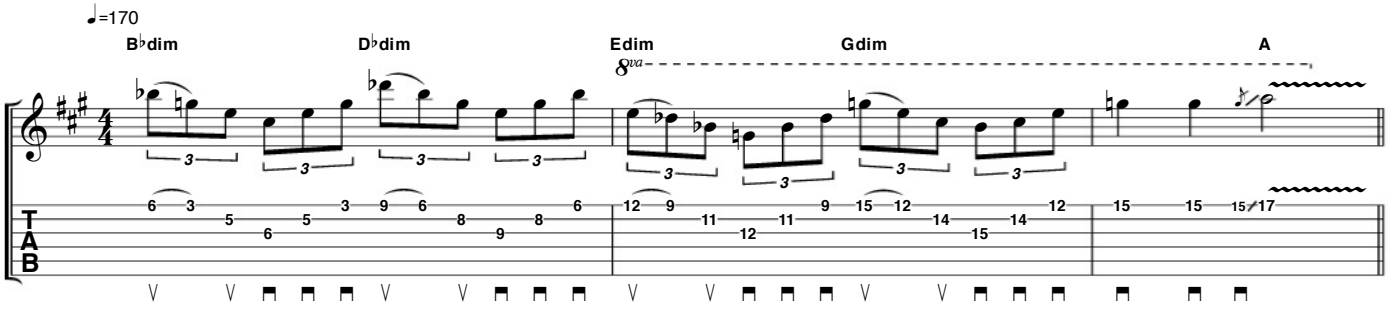

It's easiest to think of these as six-note phrases that go down and up through each shape. The picking is key to making the lick work. Play: upstroke, pull-off upstroke, then three downstrokes to outline each six-note arpeggio. Those consecutive downstrokes are the core of what is known as sweep picking, because you're using one single 'sweep' of your pick to achieve the downs.

04 PENTATONIC CYCLES

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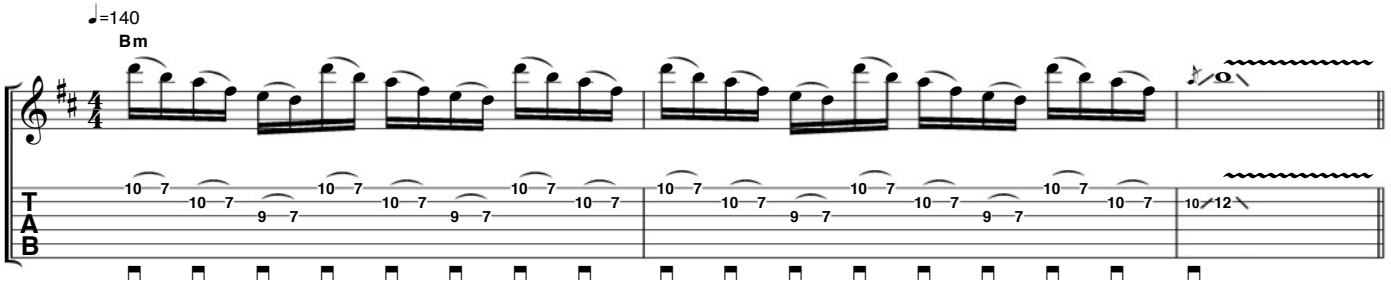

Pentatonics are essential weapons in the arsenal of every guitarist – they apply in rock, blues, jazz, metal and more. Here, Sophie uses the old trick of repetition, where you take a bite-sized lick and repeat it to get the listener's attention. Slash, Eric Clapton and Angus Young have all employed this technique. The beauty is that you can repeat as long as you like, take a melodic detour, then return to your initial idea again. It's a very open concept.

05 SHREDDY TAPPING

bit.ly/tg376audio

There are two ways to aid your learning process here in Sophie's shreddy tapped lick. First, practise four-note phrases one at a time. The circled notes are tapped with the pick hand; the square ones are hammered on with a fretting finger. The second approach is, as Sophie advises, to focus on each hand individually. In particular, it'll help if you memorise where the tapped notes are on the fretboard so you don't have to look at your finger every time you tap.

Words Amit Sharma Photos Matt Barnes

"SOME RIFFS CAN BE JUST AS DEMANDING AS SOLOS"

Techniques for modern metal. By **Josh Middleton**

Following the shock announcement that he was parting ways with Architects back in May, Josh Middleton is back to doing what he does best – churning out an onslaught of finger-twisting riffs and leads on the new Sylosis album, *A Sign Of Things To Come*. Ahead of the band's live dates in November, Josh discusses what makes a well-rounded metal musician…

Alternate picking is clearly one of your strong points. How did you hone in on that particular technique?
"I think it's really important to be able to alternate pick groups of threes. Because the modes are a big part of lead playing and that's how they are generally played. It's not very natural to begin with because if you start on a downstroke, the notes you play on the next string will begin with an upstroke. It takes a while to get to grips with, but it's a crucial part of well-balanced lead playing. Three note per-string modes were one of the first things I ever practised as a kid and I genuinely attribute a lot of my skills to that – strict alternate picking up and down the neck. I didn't necessarily listen to their music but reading about and hearing people like Paul Gilbert and Zakk Wylde through guitar magazines made me realise I liked the sound of picking every note."

It's a technique that comes in handy for your more adventurous riffing, too…
"Exactly. The right and left hand co-ordination is essential, whether that's for lead or rhythm. For metal guitar, the lines between the two can get kinda blurry. Some riffs can be just as demanding as solos – just listen to a song like *Spheres Of Madness* by Decapitated, which has these fast palm-muted diminished lines and lower string bursts. If you want to be a well-rounded metal player, alternate picking is something you cannot skip out on. It's all about getting used to those uncomfortable groups. Another thing I like to do is sequence my runs – you can get more mileage out of different licks by breaking them into groups of three or four or five or whatever you want. The idea is that you play a group of notes and then start again on the second one you played going one note further. And then you start on the third note, and so forth."

And you're also no stranger to string skipping and sweep picking…
"I got comfortable with string skipping before I got into sweep picking. I find it easier for some reason. I guess us guitar players seem to like them because they have wide intervallic leaps – both techniques allow you to go from one note to another elsewhere in the scale in quick succession. It's the melodic distance that sounds impressive. It's a much easier way of covering a lot of ground in a short amount of time. Something like a symmetrical diminished line, a series of minor third intervals on the G and high E can sound really fast. Leaving gaps in between the strings you play can make your lines sound almost more like a keyboard or piano."

Is there a particular practice regime that helped get you where you are today?
"My approach when I was first learning and doing most of my woodshedding was asking myself, 'What's the most annoying and hardest thing to play?'. And I'd work on all of that stuff because I knew at some point I might need to do it. So I would write myself licks that would test me or required awkward picking stuff, and then force myself to learn them slow and then faster and faster. Everyone's so concerned with speed. As much as it's fun to be able to play fast, if you try to jump ahead you might neglect the quality of your playing or the cleanliness of how you put it all together. That always comes first for me. I'd rather be able to nail something 100 per cent at half speed than play it with a bunch of mistakes at full speed. And also, if you learn something the wrong way, it becomes harder to unlearn it later down the line."

So do you practise on the clean channel or with distortion?
"Both are valid. If you practise clean, there's no distortion hiding your pick attack. If you're playing really fast licks on a clean amp, you can hear every mistake clearly and if you're not nailing it, you can tell. On the other hand, if you only practise clean, when you eventually play through an amp with loads of distortion, you might realise you are not muting the strings properly. You'll have things ringing out and all these scrapey scratchy noises that only come through when you are using a high gain sound. That's why I do it both ways, through an amp and also unplugged while watching TV on the sofa. Obviously if people are with you, they'll probably find it really irritating! But it all goes in as muscle memory – through your hands and into your brain."

***A Sign Of Things To Come* is out now.**

"I WOULD WRITE LICKS THAT WOULD TEST ME OR REQUIRED AWKWARD PICKING"

VIDEO GUEST LESSON!
BIT.LY/TG376AUDIO

JOSH MIDDLETON
SHRED SCHOOL!

The Sylosis shredder teaches five creative ways to get shredding in C♯ tuning

Here in a lesson written bespoke for TG, Sylosis main man Josh Middleton presents five licks that'll help you get shredding. Before you dive in with his tab, first take note of some broader concepts. To start, Josh is using the Phrygian dominant mode throughout. So what? Well, its exotic harmony is a great start point for various sub-genres of metal, particularly melodic death metal and thrash.

Next, Josh's guitar is in C# standard tuning, which though less relevant for our purposes (Josh isn't playing particularly low here), is suitably low for jamming along – and seeing as his licks are in C#, you get the benefit of the low root note.

Each of Josh's licks has a technical and creative idea for you to explore. Learn them note for note or treat them as springboards for your own ideas. He's even created a jam track for us all to play along to. Thanks Josh!

01 MIMICKING SWEEP PICKING

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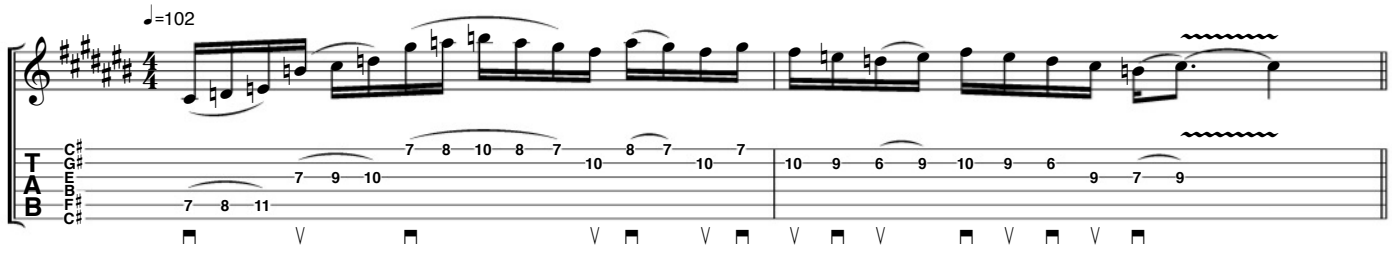

Josh introduces his first lick by emphasising how string skipping can "mimic sweep picking, cover a lot of ground and get some wide intervallic leaps happening". Handy, because sweep picking is just quite hard to do – and any shortcut to a similar vibe is alright by us!

Transcription Charlie Griffiths **Photo** Getty

02 ACCURACY WHEN PICKING

bit.ly/tg376audio

This lick is arranged with three notes per string and Josh picks every note. As he explains, "It's really important to practise picking every note because it's quite an annoying way to pick; sometimes you'll start on a downstroke and sometimes you'll start on the next string on an upstroke." He's dead right – it can be tricky, so make sure to practise slowly and focus on accuracy.

03 TWISTY DESCENDING SHRED

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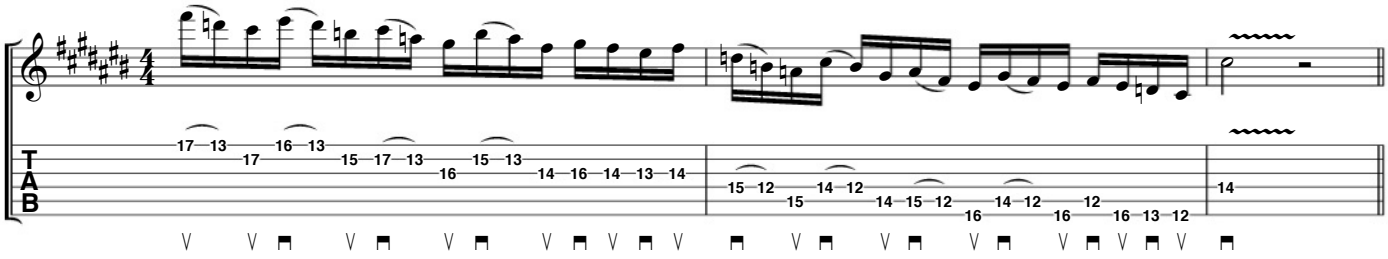

More Phrygian dominant shreddy goodness here, with a twisty descending lick, which, as Josh explains, includes a mix of picking and hammer-ons/pull-offs. This allows for more contrast in the accents than a straight alternate picked approach would give you.

04 EVIL DIMINISHED RUN

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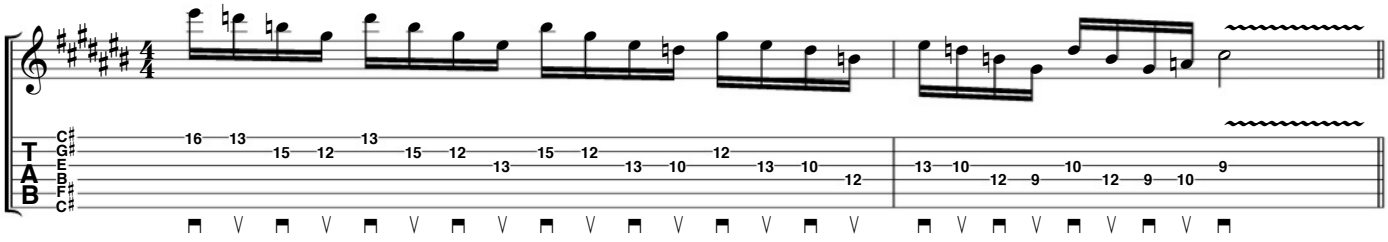

Whole songs are written in the Phrygian dominant mode; diminished chords, however, tend to be short-lived – evil-sounding, dissonant blasts that resolve quickly back to friendlier harmonies. Thing is, the notes of a diminished triad can be found in the Phrygian dominant mode starting on its second note. D is the second note of C♯ Phrygian dominant, so Josh is playing a D diminished run over a C♯ Phrygian progression. Gettit?

05 EXPLORING THE FRETBOARD

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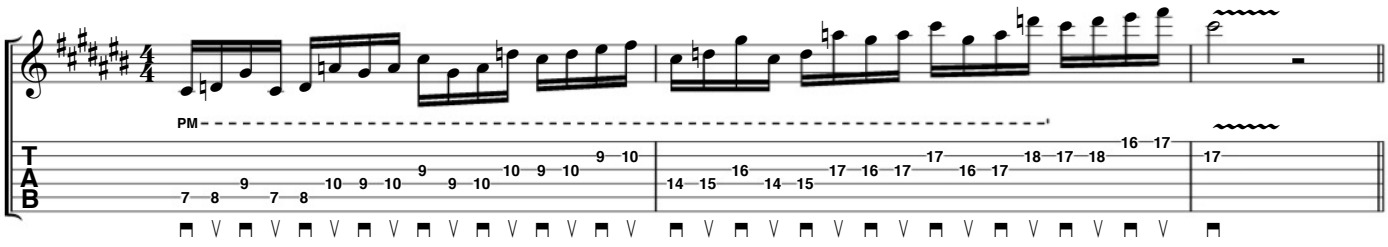
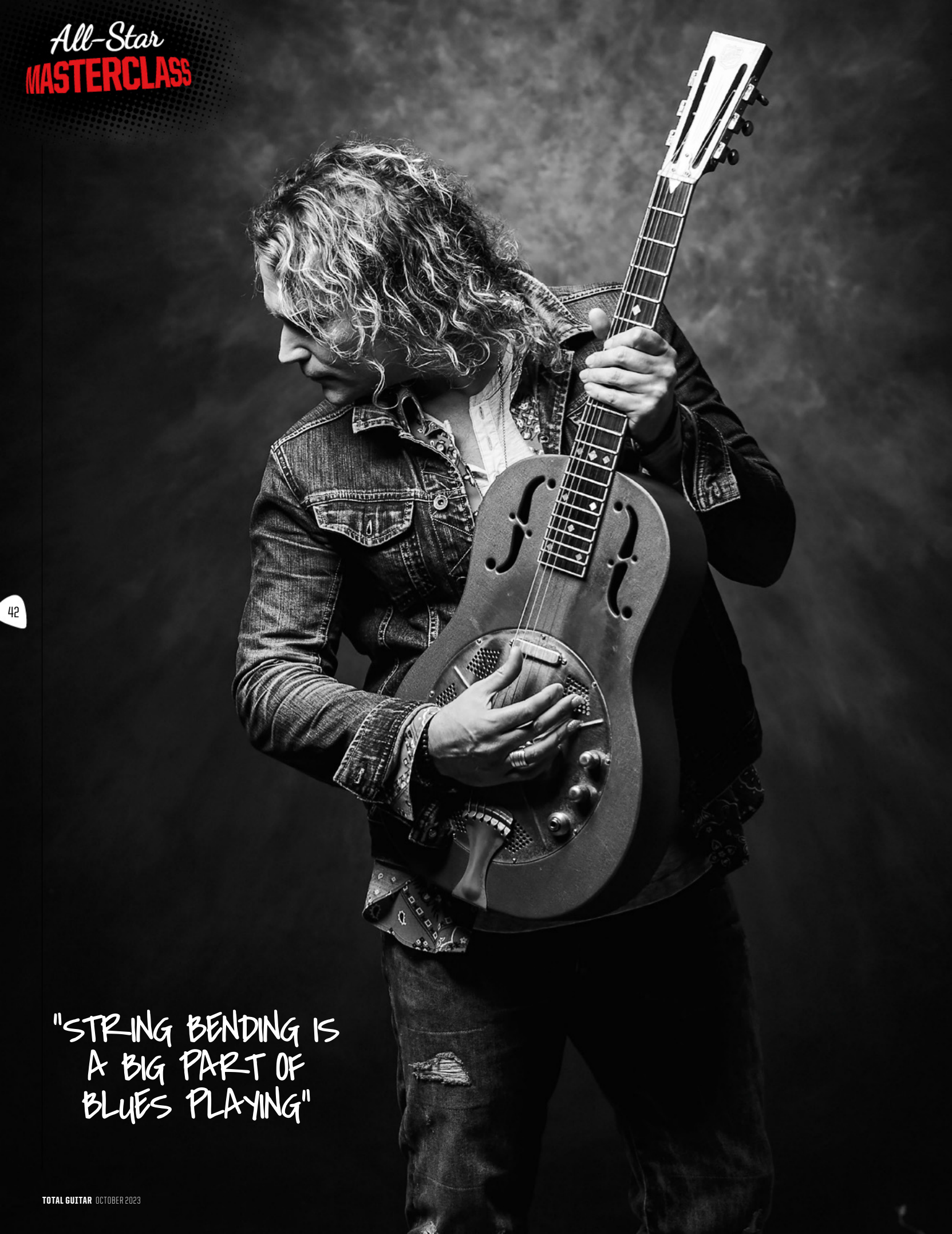


Here Josh presents a simple way to get more mileage out of a relatively simple lick: play the same notes an octave higher. You could just head 12 frets up the neck, but Josh has ascended only seven frets, also crossing to a higher string to reach the octave mark. This gives some slightly different phrasing options compared to just playing the same patterns 12 frets up.



"STRING BENDING IS A BIG PART OF BLUES PLAYING"

Words Amit Sharma **Photos** Matt Barnes

"KEEP THAT WRIST LOOSE AND BOUNCING!"

Philip Sayce on blues, bends and phrasing

LISTEN TO ALBERT COLLINS

The first thing that comes to mind whenever I'm having a conversation about digging into the blues and taking it to the next level is 'Listen to Albert Collins!' He played some of the most tricky, powerful and terrifying stuff as far as blues players go. I'm always blown away by the tremendous power he had in his hands, from the pick attack with the thumb and index finger. He'd get under the low wound string and just snap it and pop it. And then with the index finger he would hammer an unwound string maybe an octave or two octaves up. So if the note was D, he'd hit the open wound string and then pop the same note on the 3rd fret of the B string. He also had the most awesome and fluid vibrato out of everyone. It would be smooth and real wide. He'd hit that note with the reverb cranked and start howling.

USE STRING BENDS TO TELL A STORY

String bending is a big part of blues playing. All of my favourites from Mark Knopfler, Eric Clapton, Jeff Healey and Stevie Ray were and are magical string-benders. I'd much rather approach the guitar using bends to make it sound more like the human voice as opposed to more linear scale-like ideas. Eric Clapton has always been so melodious, even if it's just a tiny bend, he could make his guitar cry, sing or say something with all this emotion. It sounds easy but it's really hard to do! Bending like that is a lifelong journey. Something like an overbend is like a release for me, coming from whatever I'm feeling right there and then.

GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD AND INTO YOUR HEART

I'm not really a technical player, I prefer to be more abstract. There are no rules when it comes to guitar. Of course, there are keys and time signatures, but in terms of improvising and finding what's in your heart on any particular day, you just need to listen and follow your own instincts.

USE SHORTER PHRASES TO SOUND LESS PREDICTABLE

It's about taking little pieces of it rather than taking a whole cascading run that goes on and on. The longer phrases don't seem to excite me as much as Albert Collins popping a single note like one knockout punch. So my advice would be to throw in little bits of those cascading runs but don't play them across in the neck in every position because they start sounding a little bit predictable. I like those runs of four and five just as much as the next player, but it's all about the little bursts rather than the complete runs across every string.

DON'T ALLOW YOUR LINES TO SOUND LIKE EXERCISES

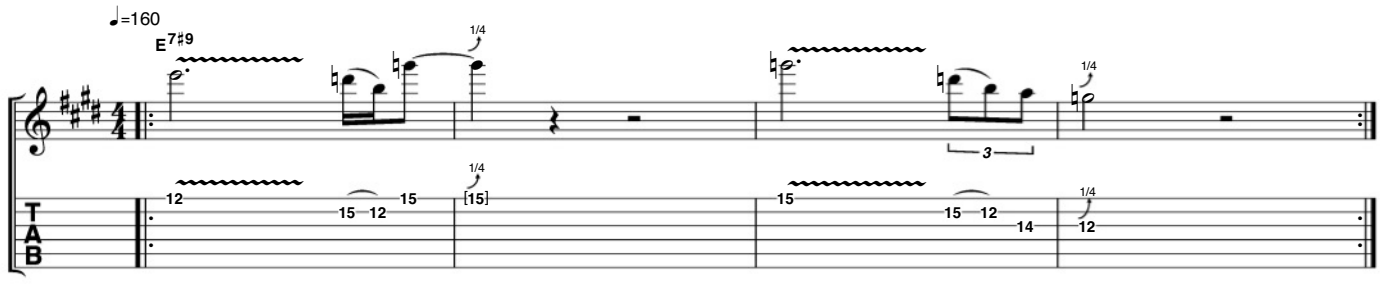
My right hand isn't the greatest when it comes to alternate picking. I admire players that have that skill down. But music is more than just that. Listen to Eddie Van Halen, he had tremendous picking abilities, but he also had this sense of humour in his playing, a lot of rhythm and all this unexpected shit going on. That's what I tend to get drawn to, rather than super fast stuff that just makes me think 'Good for you!' I like the players who sound less robotic, which is partly why I ended up using hybrid picking a lot – mixing up the pick with my middle finger and ring finger. That way some notes will have a different sound to them, they might have a different kind of snap or pop. That sounded and felt better to me. As for the super-technical alternate-picking stuff, my heart's not in that. I prefer the idea of using a rolling fingerstyle technique.

LEARN THE MINOR AND MAJOR PENTATONIC IN EVERY POSITION

I listen to a lot of Eric Johnson and love the way he approaches things. One thing that strikes me about him is how he knows both major and minor pentatonic shapes all over the neck. You never see him just staying in that one box. If your ear likes the sound of those pentatonic notes, it's important you learn them in every position. That's what gives you flexibility and helps with phrasing, too, because licks can sound slightly different depending on where you are. If you're working hard on playing in E up at the 12th fret, learn what you can do around the 5th fret or the 7th fret. Then after a while you can start to explore playing one note outside of that normal run.

Philip Sayce tours the UK from November 19–25.

PHILIP SAYCE STYLE PHRASING bit.ly/tg376audio



Our Sayce-inspired example is based around the staple E minor pentatonic scale shape one. Following Philip's advice, we're playing "little pieces", popping a single E note hard with a down-pick and adding vibrato. This is followed by a short snippet of a cascading run, the little bursts made of three or four notes, instead of covering the whole fretboard.

"I RARELY TOUCH THE GUITAR BEFORE A GIG"

Words Amit Sharma Photo John McMurtrie

"SPONTANEITY IS IMPORTANT"

Janick Gers of Iron Maiden on soloing and staying fresh

YOU HAVE TO EXPERIMENT

You can use a lot of different tunings. I keep a lot of guitars around the house in different tunings. That way, when you pick one up different things come out. You have to experiment and see what interests you. Once you know, you have to carry on and try to push your boundaries. Practice is important but use your mind and think. Everyone has a different way of playing. There are a lot of guitar schools where you learn the same chords and scales, which ultimately means people ending up sounding the same. You have to be innovative and remember that nobody does it right. There is no right. There is no best. Everything is what you make it. Try to find the best way to get what's in your mind into your fingers and onto your guitars. That's how you find melodies. Put your personality onto your guitar...

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO DO WITH A SOLO

You need to practice your alternate picking and scales but you have to remember a lot of those things you can't actually put into songs. You need to have the ability to do more than that. What people tend to do is learn licks and then try to stick them into the solos, and that's not really the way to do it. You should think about what you actually want to do with each solo. But what I say is not right, you've got to make your own mind up. Nobody is wrong. A Rolls Royce is the same as a Mini. If you're excited enough you can get moving. Everything is equal. A Led Zeppelin album costs as much as the guy playing the pub round the corner. It's down to you to find what you believe in, how you practise and what you hope to achieve. Practice is important, because you have to be able to play whatever you are thinking. You need to know how to put it onto the guitar.

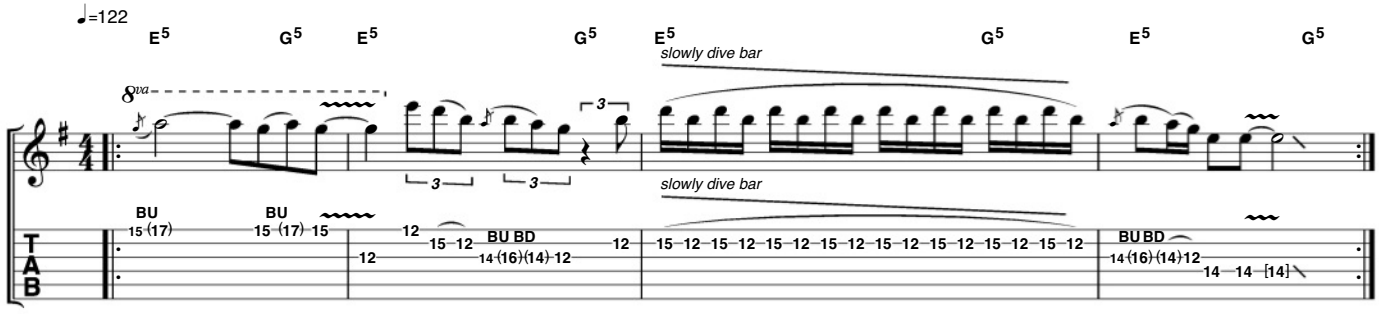
WARMING UP IS OVERRATED

I find that before a gig, I very rarely touch the guitar. I want to see what happens when I get out there. I don't like to warm up, the first time I'll pick up my guitar is when I'm about to walk on stage. I find that exciting because I don't know what's going to happen! I'm not backstage with a metronome thinking I'm not 'on' tonight or anything like that. I'll check the tuning and then I'm out there, feeling that buzz every night. It's always a shock. We don't soundcheck because when the halls are empty, the echoes are ridiculous. We're playing these huge arenas and you can barely hear what's going on, the sound goes round and round. So our stage crew do a line check in the afternoon. The sound is set before the audience are in, but as you know, once people are in the arena, the echoes disappear. A lot of bands soundcheck for five hours and then come on stage thinking, 'Oh, now it sounds sh*t!' And of course it does, because they've set it up for the echo, but really you need to do it for when the people are in. So going out there and not knowing what the audience will be like and how the gig is going to go, I find that exciting. It's like jumping into a freezing cold pond and wondering what will happen next. It hits you in the face. The excitement is refreshing!

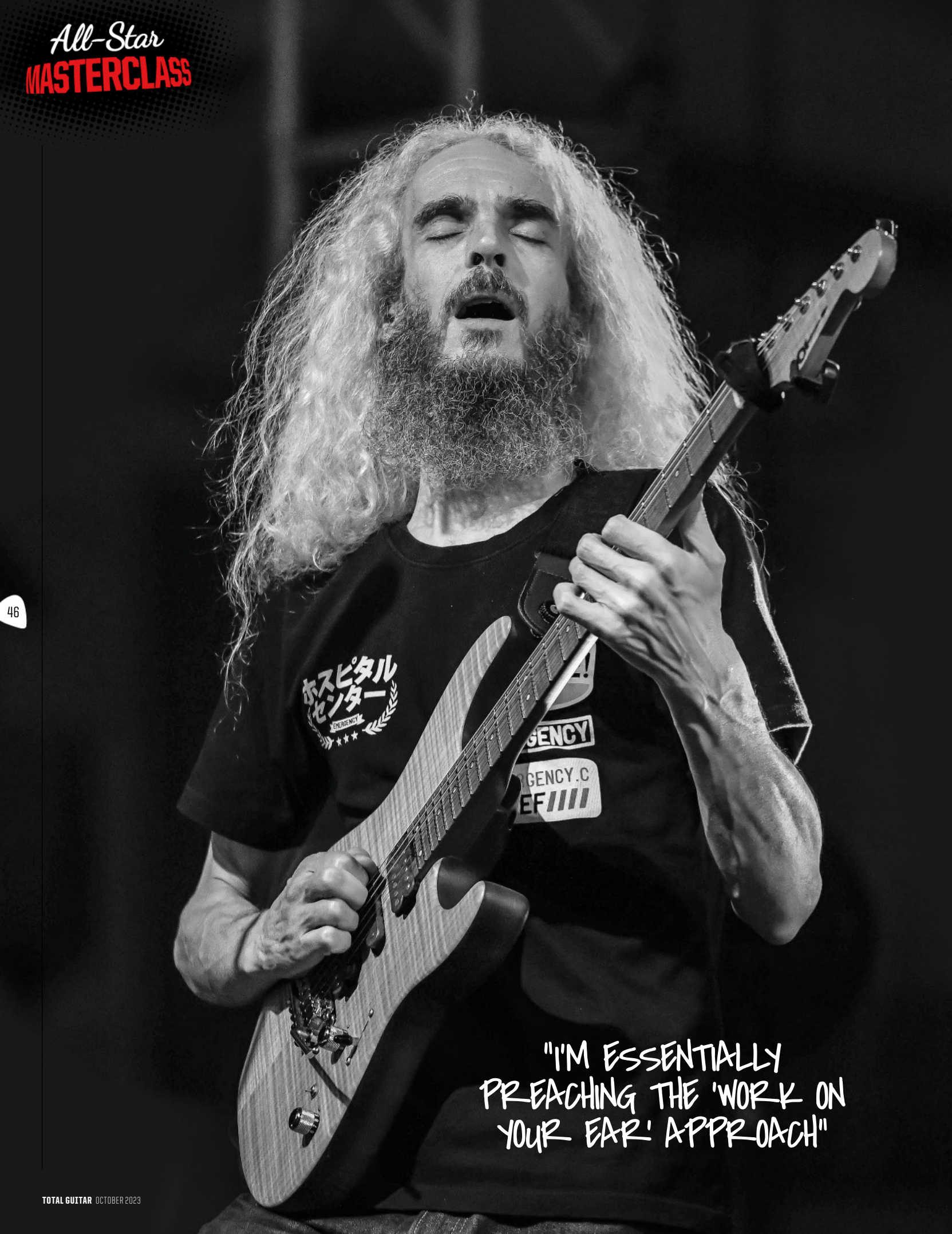
KEEP SOLOS SPONTANEOUS

Spontaneity is important. For me personally, if that disappears, it becomes a cabaret act. So I like to change the solos slightly, not to the point where people get pissed off, but utilise different areas within the solo. Every night I try to make it a little bit different, but still keeping the main melodies. The one thing that would kill me is doing the same thing every night. It can't be like that with me. Even my chord inversions change, I'm looking for better ways all the time. I never wanted to be in a cabaret band. I've seen that happen to people and it becomes mundane. I never work out my solos.
I purposely try to and do something different every time, if I cut a solo on a track three times before choosing, each one will be different. Looking for something different every time keeps you on edge – you feel the rage and the excitement. If I knew exactly what I'd play every night, after 10 gigs on a nine-month tour... Some people do that and that's fine, people like Steve Howe will play exactly the same lines – and he's incredible – but that's not for me. I need more excitement, otherwise it becomes cabaret... I can't be having that!"

PICKING, SCALES AND PHRASING bit.ly/tg376audio



Our Janick Gers style example features a series of ideas that link together, starting with some high register string bends followed by a trill between the 12th and 15th frets on the second string. To create an ear-grabbing Doppler-like effect, the whammy bar can be depressed gradually whilst the trill is played.



"I'M ESSENTIALLY PREACHING THE 'WORK ON YOUR EAR' APPROACH"

Words Amit Sharma **Photos** The Moneta

"I'M A BELIEVER IN CHALLENGING YOURSELF"

Guthrie Govan on the art of improvisation

MUSIC IS A LANGUAGE

Everyone's journey getting acquainted with the guitar is slightly different. Everyone eventually becomes the player they deserve to be based on how they chose to spend their time practising. It's what they chose to prioritise... that's what informs the end result. Someone whose goal is to become an improviser might naturally gravitate towards a path like the one I've picked – which is based around wanting music to feel like talking. Music is a language, so let's try to make it feel like my first language. Part of my practice time would therefore be getting things I can hear in my head out onto the fingerboard. If that's the goal you set yourself, then naturally you will spend time trying to get to that place, where you feel more fluid as an improviser and less scared to play something you haven't prepared, practised or drilled before the audience shows up.

COPY EVERYTHING YOU HEAR

For some people, it's a psychological barrier that stops them from improvising. It's the fear of playing something that might not work. But it's a bit like how babies are born and know how to swim, then they forget and have to relearn. I like to think when we're born we all know how to improvise and then society suppresses some of that. Part of feeling good when you are improvising is being comfortable with the process and trusting yourself. But there are other more mechanical things you can work on. I'm a big believer in copying everything you hear around you – from ringtones to movie themes and whatever is on the radio.

SING NOTES AS YOU PLAY

Anything you hear is fair game and material you can use to work on your ear. Listen to everything that's going on around you and try to replicate it on the instrument. You can do that in two ways – one where you stay in a more positional scale box zone of the fingerboard, getting comfortable with the interval between each string, but also trying to play more vocally, moving up and down the neck on fewer strings. Those two approaches fit together and compliment each other nicely. There's room for both of them. The general idea is that if your ear gets really good at understanding what other people are playing and you get really good at replicating that, and then one day, when you invent a melody in your head that no-one in the world has heard yet, you can use that same copying skillset to get the music out of your head and into your amp. I'm essentially preaching the 'work on your ear' approach, not at the expense of anything else. For a lot of players, it's just a case of adding this into your existing routine. Even if you're sat there doing scales and arpeggios, it's good to get into the habit of singing every note as you play it. That way you're able to predict what each note will sound like as it happens.

THINK BIGGER

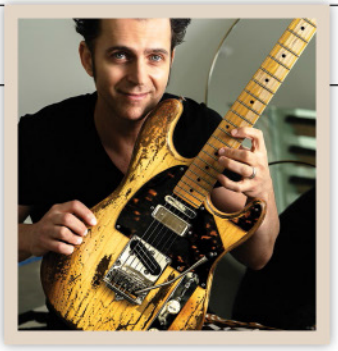
Nothing comes entirely out of the vacuum. If either of us were to improvise two notes, someone will have played that melody before. There are only so many intervals. Part of developing that language is thinking in bigger building blocks. If you can recognise an arpeggio as one thing, maybe viewing it more like a word rather than four letters, that can really aid the flow of how you improvise. Too many small ideas can be overwhelming. A smaller quantity of more complex ideas is closer to speaking a language.

WORK ON THINGS YOU HAVEN'T NAILED YET

There is a trap when you get too good at a lick and it becomes a comfort. Whenever you want to make yourself feel better, part of your subconscious will encourage you to play that thing you've played a million times before because you know it will sound well-executed. The part about that that's haunting is you realise deep down that you're not really choosing to play that. It's your hand choosing to play that. It's not your soul. There's an interesting thing about practising and how we choose to divide our time. If you sound really good when you're practising, that means you're practising things you can already do, which isn't really benefiting you fully. Some of what you practice should sound sh*t, because then you know you are working on something that needs to be worked on. There's a balance there.

GUTHRIE'S IMPROV TRICKS **bit.ly/tg376audio**

Inspired by Guthrie's tip about jamming along to whatever's on the radio, here we're assuming you're a Classic FM fan, and here we've created a version of *The Swan* by Saint Saens. It's a simple melody, here in the key of E major. Try playing along to the audio before looking too closely at the tab here. Once you've looked at the tab, try to develop the melody further in G major.



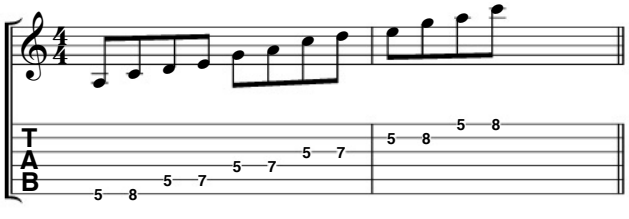
DWEEZIL ZAPPA PENTATONIC PAIRS

Dweezil gets creative with some bite-sized tricks with those familiar pentatonic shapes

In this lesson Dweezil shows you a few licks to help you visualise the fretboard as *three sets of two adjacent strings* and he demonstrates why this is useful. As he says, "Most of you are probably well familiar with the A minor pentatonic scale played in 5th position (ex1). Within this pattern, there are three specific shapes that can be played on adjacent strings. Using this 5th-position pattern, I can visualise these different shapes of minor pentatonic that fall on each set of adjacent strings."

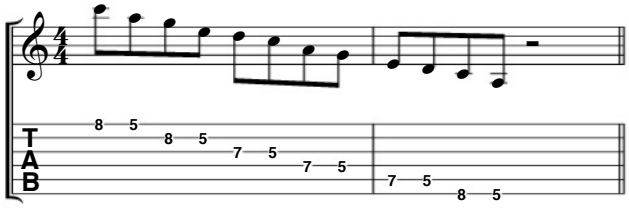
What he's getting at is that you don't need to make it business as usual running up and down a scale you know only too well. You can mix it up and get more creative mileage by thinking in different shapes. And if the prospect of mapping out the minor pentatonic across the whole neck seems a bit of a mission, these bite-sized two-string shapes make it easier.

01 A MINOR PENTATONIC (ASCENDING) bit.ly/tg376audio



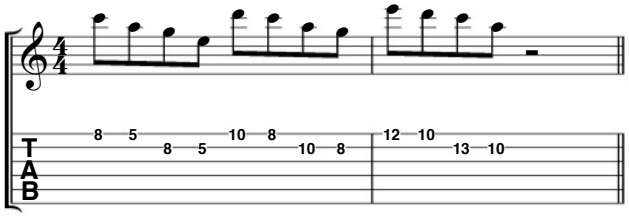
Here Dweezil plays up through the A minor pentatonic scale from low to high. Try to visualise each pair of strings as you play.

02 A MINOR PENTATONIC (DESCENDING) bit.ly/tg376audio



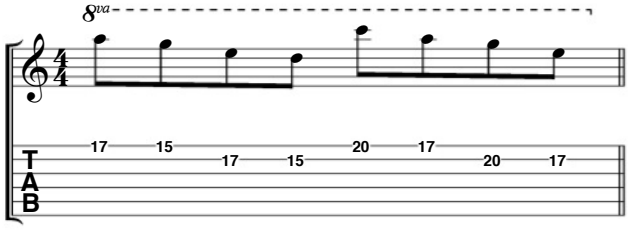
Here's the same thing, this time played descending. The three 'shapes' Dweezil refers to reside on the B and high E strings, the G and D, and finally the bottom two strings.

03 TWO-NOTE SHAPES (MOVED) bit.ly/tg376audio



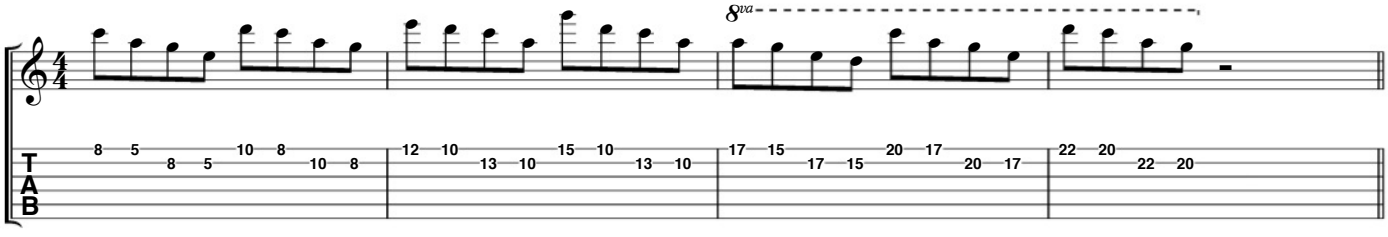
Dweezil describes how he moves this idea around the fretboard: "If I were to transfer those three shapes to one pair of adjacent strings, the result is the sequence demonstrated here."

04 TWO-NOTE SHAPES (HIGHER) bit.ly/tg376audio



The final two shapes are performed here, higher up on the fretboard, and the last of these shapes represents the octave up from where we started.

05 RUN OF TWO-NOTE SHAPES bit.ly/tg376audio

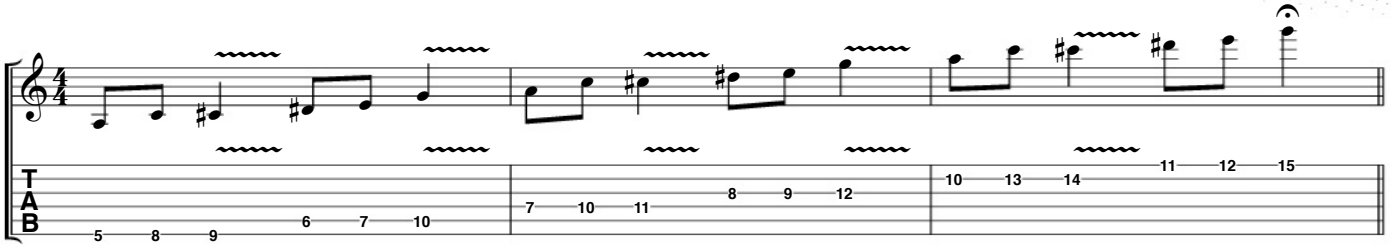


This lick illustrates all five distinct shapes in sequence. After these first five, the shapes then repeat an octave higher, up in 17th and 20th positions.

Photo Jeffery Dean

06 EXTRA NOTES

bit.ly/tg376audio



Here, Dweezil introduces notes from outside the minor pentatonic scale, giving more some alternative vibe. He explains, "I can continually move up the fretboard by alternating between root/minor 3rd/major 3rd, then flatted 5th/5th/flatted 7th on consecutive pairs of adjacent strings."

07 LICK 1

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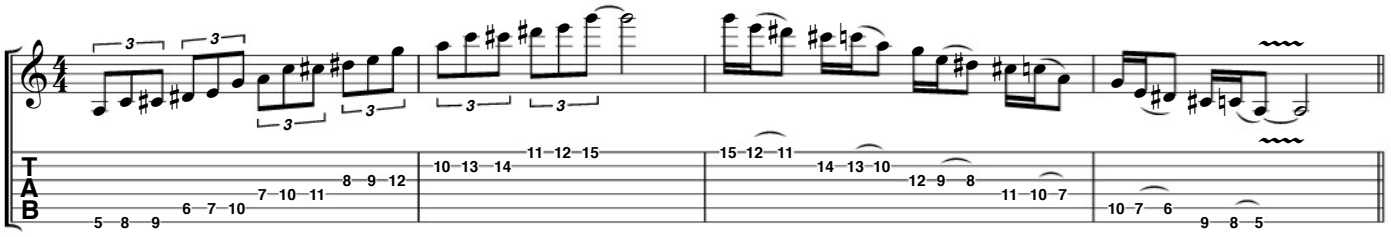


Here Dweezil turns his last idea into a more creative lick, ascending the sequence in eighth-note triplets and descending in 16th and eighth-note patterns.

08 LICK 2

bit.ly/tg376audio

Finally, Dweezil plays through these shapes in an unbroken string of quintuplets (five-note groups), which yields some pretty interesting results and makes the ordinary minor pentatonic scale suddenly sound like something a bit different.

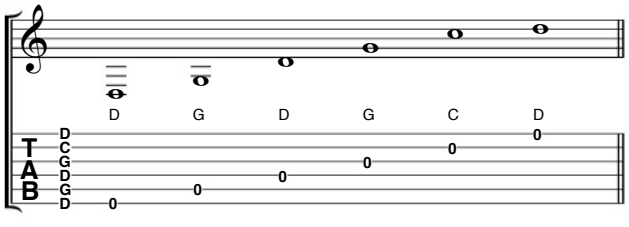
MOLLY TUTTLE
THE CLAW!

Get started with a common bluegrass fingerstyle technique known as the clawhammer

Here in this lesson, bluegrass ace Molly Tuttle demonstrates one of the guitar techniques she relies on the most for both performing and songwriting: the clawhammer fingerstyle technique.

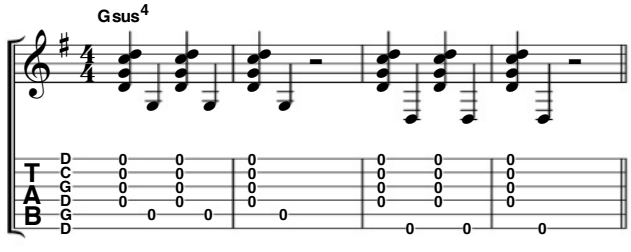
The basic clawhammer strumming technique begins with putting your pick hand into a "claw"-type shape, with the thumb and index finger pointed in towards each other. The nails of the index and middle fingers are used to rake across the higher strings while the thumb is used to pluck the lower strings. Molly demonstrates this with some basics before playing a traditional tune titled Little Sadie, which is tabbed below. Before you get started, the first step is to put your guitar into an alternate tuning, one that is similar to a banjo tuning…

01 CLAWHAMMER TUNING NOTES
bit.ly/tg376audio



This tuning is virtually the same as open G, but with one variation: open G tuning is, low to high: D G D G B D; clawhammer tuning is D G D G C D which tunes the second string to C.

02 INDEX-FINGER AND THUMB PLAYING
bit.ly/tg376audio



This example illustrates a typical way to alternate between index-finger and thumb accents with this playing approach. The thumb strikes the fifth string in the first two bars and the sixth string in the next two bars.

03 BUM DITTY
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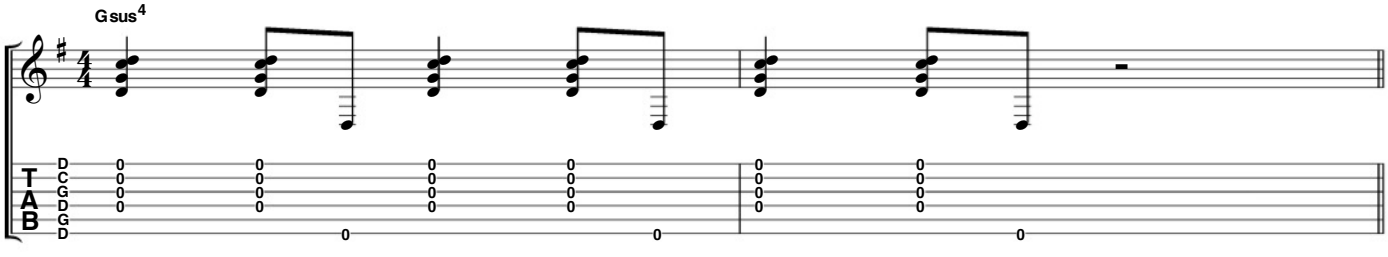
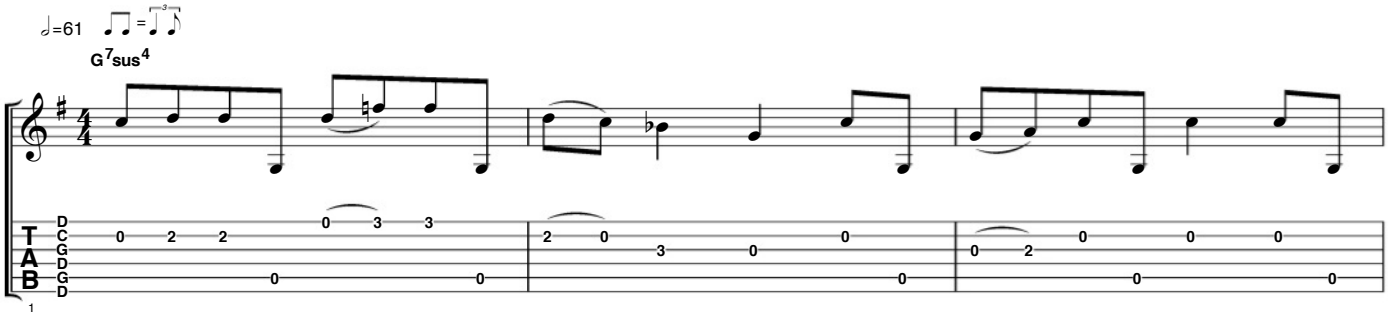


Molly explains this essentially onomatopoeic rhythm. "As the name implies, there are three accents: the initial 'bum' is on the high strings, followed by another high-string accent on 'dit-' and ending with a low-string accent on '-ty'."

04 LITTLE SADIE (SLOW)
bit.ly/tg376audio



04 LITTLE SADIE (SLOW, cont'd)

bit.ly/tg376audio

Molly continues her lesson with this old traditional tune, played slowly here to illustrate how the basic bum ditty rhythm lies within. See if you can pick out the "bum ditty" pattern throughout the example.

05 LITTLE SADIE (AT TEMPO)

bit.ly/tg376audio

As Molly plays the tune up to speed, some of the melodies come out a little differently. Once you feel comfortable with this technique at the slower tempo, try gradually ramping it up to the full performance tempo as your picking hand becomes more comfortable with moving between the higher and lower strings.

GREG KOCH
SOLOING OVER A BLUES PROGRESSION

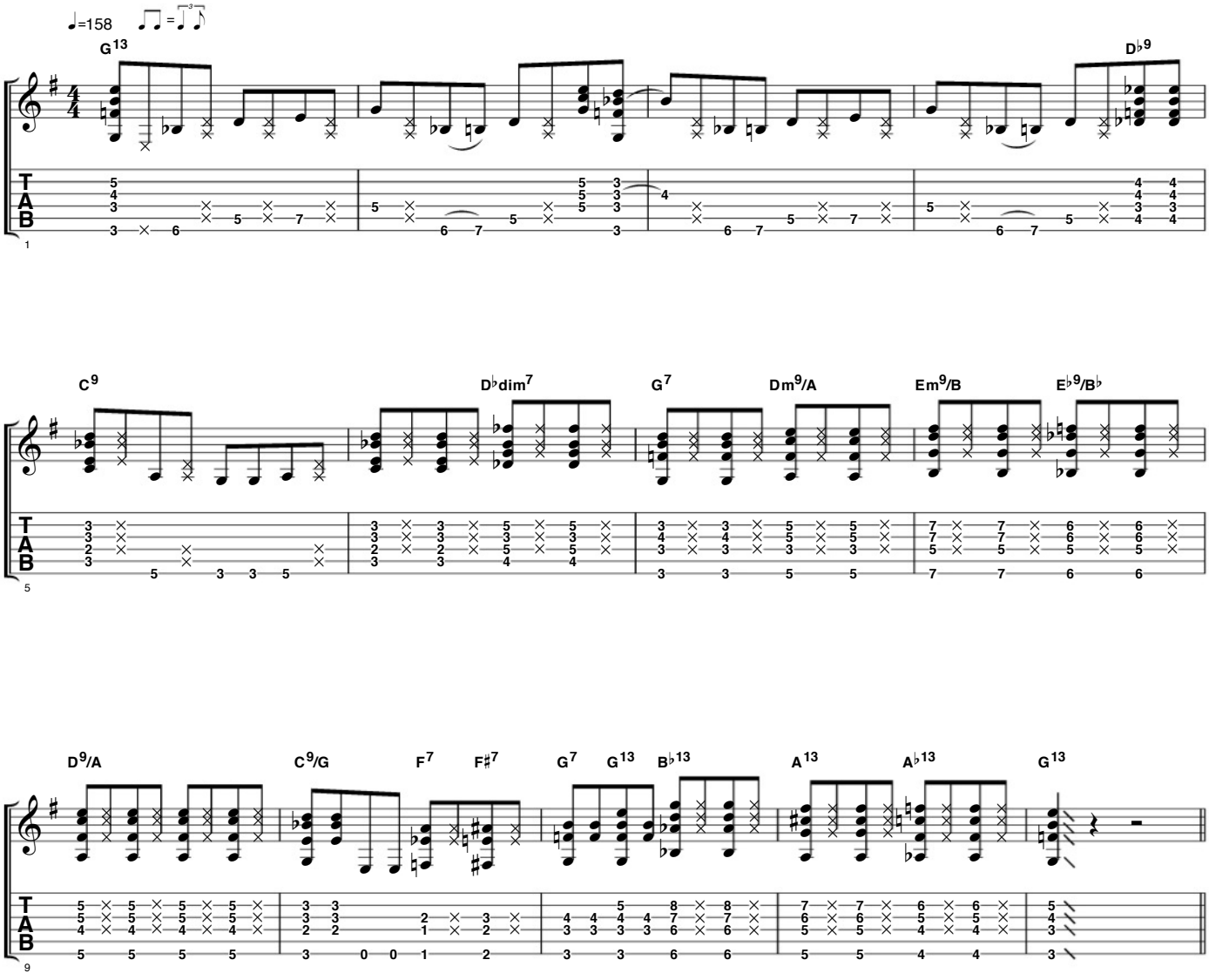
Get the lowdown on chords-and-bassline style playing from the Milwaukee blues great

Greg Koch has left an indelible imprint on the guitar world through his recordings and instructional materials. His stock in trade? Just some of the finest blues guitar heard anywhere on the planet. Here in his lesson, he explains how, during duo gigs with a harmonica player, he'd cover chords and a bassline, adding in jazzy substitutions for colour.

There are loads of great chord tricks here – try focusing your attention in one pitch range in the tab. There's a lot to be learned about underlining chords just by following the movement on the bass strings.

Greg also demonstrates how to employ some Albert Collins–inspired lead licks over his chords. The tab's not too complex but check out the feel in the video.

01 12-BAR BLUES RHYTHM bit.ly/tg376audio



"In bars 1-4, I supplement a G13 chord with a walking bassline, adding muted string accents on most of the eighth-note upbeats," Greg says. This really is the 'big' concept here. You don't need to hammer away on chords the whole time – think: chord, bassline, chord. Work gradually through the tab to see how Greg outlines the 12-bar blues.

02 SOLO OVER THE TOP

bit.ly/tg376audio

"This is an improvised solo played over this progression, for which I took an Albert Collins approach," Greg says. Notice the change from G major pentatonic (G A B D E) in bars 1 to 3 to G minor pentatonic (G B♭ C D F) in bar 4, and the frequent subsequent shifts. "Albert picked aggressively with his fingers, snapping the strings against the fretboard."

JOE BONAMASSA
DEVISING CREATIVE BLUES TURNAROUNDS

Try a new approach to the humble blues turnaround courtesy of one the genre's greats

Joe Bonamassa is one of the world's most popular blues-rock guitarists, a top producer and de facto ambassador of the blues. Here he takes you through his own creative take on the blues turnaround.

Joe tells us, "I came up with an unusual approach to the turnaround that sometimes freaks people out a little bit… based on sliding half-step bends, so they can sound a little jarring, in that they are not perfectly in tune. If you have perfect pitch, watch out! There's a bit of a rub in the way these half-step bends sit on top of the chords. In fact, that is what I like about them. To my ears, this turnaround technique sounds very expressive and provides some of the 'grease' that I love to hear in blues guitar playing."

01 CLASSIC TURNAROUND

bit.ly/tg376audio

A classic way to start a slow blues in A is with the turnaround demonstrated by Joe here. Most blues guitarists use these types of chromatically descending 6ths, or ascending ones, for turnarounds, as well as in rhythm parts or during solos. Following the low A root note Joe plays chromatically descending 6th intervals fretted on the G and high E strings.

02 JOE'S TRICK

bit.ly/tg376audio

Here's Joe's unusual approach to outlining a turnaround. Staying in the key of A, this example starts with an A root note sounded in conjunction with a half-step bend from C, the minor 3rd, to C♯, the major 3rd. This shape then shifts up a half step to B♭, followed by a descending lick that makes brief reference to the V chord, E7.

03 VARIATION

bit.ly/tg376audio

Here, Joe presents a twist on the theme. "The sound is ominous, and I like the musical tension it creates," he says. It opens on a roughly chromatically moving line, though the two notes of each diad move in irregular steps, so watch out for that. Experiment for yourself with the idea. You can target any chord in the I-IV-V blues progression.

04 LEAD GUITAR CONTEXT

bit.ly/tg376audio

Joe's final example offers another way to use those half-step bends to give your solos some attitude, and takes a little inspiration from one of his heroes. "I love the Buddy Guy approach, wherein he purposely will bend notes a little out of tune to get that rub."

VIDEO STAR
"There was no YouTube when I was trying to learn that stuff," Marty says

Words Amit Sharma **Photo** Sam Cahill

"GREAT RHYTHM GUITAR WILL HELP MAKE YOUR SOLO SOUND BETTER"

YouTube guitar guru **Marty Schwartz** on the importance of getting the basics right

Even if you don't quite recognise the name Marty Schwartz, you'll probably have ended up stumbling across his hugely popular Marty Music YouTube videos – viewed in their millions and helping players learn classics riffs, solos and techniques. The fedora-loving educator's influence is so vast, Epiphone just announced they would be awarding him with his own ES-335 signature. We figured he'd be a great person to tap up for this month's tips-based issue…

Before you started on YouTube, you were a guitar teacher. What's the biggest mistake all guitarists make?

"There are two things that come to mind. The first one is rhythm in general. Guitar out in the wild – not in your bedroom but performing and playing with other people – is 90 per cent rhythm. I'd say a lot of people skip that stuff out. When you watch someone on Instagram or on stage, the most exciting bit is usually the dazzling solo sections. But people forget great rhythm guitar will help make your solo sound better. We tend to overlook the importance of it. A great rhythm technique is way more valuable and important in any kind of band, unless you're doing that guitar hero stuff like the Paul Gilberts and Polyphias of the world!

"The other thing is taking in too much information. I remember before the internet, you'd get a chord book with 20,000 chords to learn, and that's just overwhelming."

That can result in information overload…

"Exactly. I've seen students where they've set themselves the challenge of learning every mode and every pentatonic position but when it comes to improvising a solo, they can barely get through. And that's because they've chosen the wrong order of things to focus on. It would be much better to play two notes really well, then add a third note and then a fourth. Limiting information helps you focus on those little skills that help you get better. I've learned this from teaching people privately rather than making videos on YouTube. I wouldn't want a student to learn any of the modes if they can't play a basic blues solo. It's not going to help them. There's a certain order that will help you progress faster and not everyone knows that. There's a downside to having all this content online. It makes people want to skip all the fundamentals and go straight to the *Sweet Child O' Mine* solo when really they should be covering the basics and building up their skills from the right foundation."

What songs have you found are the most helpful for guitar players hoping to advance quickly?

"*Little Wing* and *Hey Joe* are both great songs to learn a lot of techniques from, because there would be a chord structure but Hendrix

BACK TO THE FUTURE

How Marty Schwartz took influence from Marty McFly with his Epiphone signature ES-335…

"I wanted to make the very best 335 that wasn't out of reach for beginners, with specs like a 60s taper neck, locking tuners and more. It's the only current Epiphone 335 that has single-coil push/pulls, which sounds awesome on a semi-hollow guitar. It's based on the Gibson ES-335 I got around five years ago. I was invited to document the making of a cherry Gibson 335. I watched them tie it, bind it, spray it, everything right down to the end of the line. And once it was finished they gave me that guitar! I didn't know they would give me the guitar at the end, so you can see how surprised and excited I am. So this signature had to be red because of that, as well as Marty McFly in *Back To The Future*! I chose block inlays because of B.B. King, that's what he had on his Lucille. There's a flame top and the back, which is something Epiphones don't tend to come with. I've seen about 20 of them and they look gorgeous, each one has a different grain to it. The other day I didn't even look at which guitar I picked up and I played a couple of songs before I realised it wasn't the Gibson!"

"LIMITING INFORMATION HELPS YOU FOCUS ON THOSE LITTLE SKILLS THAT HELP YOU GET BETTER"

Photo Getty

wouldn't just play the chords. He would do this accompanying melody within the chords to make it a pretty piece, but you could still hear the changes.

"Another song that comes to mind is *Blue Sky* by The Allman Brothers Band because that's a classic major pentatonic solo. They had that specific sound down. There was no YouTube when I was trying to learn that stuff. I would be playing the minor pentatonic wondering how they made it sound so sweet and country-ish. Once my teacher showed me the major pentatonic I realised I didn't have to learn a new scale, I could just superimpose the minor pentatonic I already knew three frets down and also find new licks. It was a light-bulb moment. Later on I learned you could play a G major triad when you're jamming in E minor. All these doors started to open because I was actively trying to understand some of the theory behind it all."

And, as for gear, what are the most valuable practice tools out there?

"I use a looper in a lot of my videos. I think they're really important because you have to be a good rhythm player to create a good loop that you want to solo over. It uses both parts of the skill base. I could easily improvise over a loop for an hour just because I'm kinda meditating and getting lost in it – but it has to be a groove that's inspiring enough for me to want to solo over. My favourite is the Boss RC-1, which is the cheapest one and also the easiest to use. But you can also connect an extra footswitcher to get it to work like the fancier ones, because things like double taps aren't great when you're adding loops in."

What's the most challenging song you've learned for the channel?

"I'm more of a feel and groove classic rock guy. I don't really do the virtuoso shred stuff. It's not what I desired to be and I have to want to get good at something in order to work on it. The hardest one was (Ozzy Osbourne's 80s classic) *Bark At The Moon*. The chords aren't too hard, but the picking speed on that open A is insane. I've seen videos of Jake E. Lee teaching it at a clinic and he couldn't even play the solo... and it's his solo! That made me feel a little better because my hands aren't really fast."

Photo Getty

So how exactly did you get that one under your fingers?

"I used an app to slow it down and keep it in pitch. There are loads of apps and websites out there to help people do that, and also loop sections they're working on. I tend to start at 70 per cent, where I can feel like I nail it every time, stick with it for a couple of weeks, and then speed up by five per cent every couple of weeks, getting it nice and tight. I got that one to 90 per cent and it was starting to feel like falling off the cliff. That's as far as I got. I didn't bother recording my video at full speed because if it was hard for me, it would be hard for pretty much anyone watching. And the video didn't even do that well – which left me wondering why I bothered!"

It's funny, playing a Hendrix or Page solo can often be more challenging than something like that – because there's a looseness and freedom in their approach...

"They're perfect examples of what you just said. Obviously Page is still alive, but they'd never have suggested anyone learn their solos note-for-note. Because they'd never play a solo exactly the same every time. Sometimes people might comment on a video of mine saying it's not exact, but those legends didn't play it exact either. It's just one take that got chosen for the album, but if you listen to Hendrix's live recordings, he would go with the flow. There are even mistakes on the records and people actually learn those mistakes, they become part of the song.

"Jimmy Page is hard to imitate because he's completely free and improvising. He had his own bag of tricks, but listen to the solo from (Led Zeppelin's) *Heartbreaker* – it's really weird and hard to play correctly. Both of those players were experiencing something more than just a bunch of notes, playing a certain run. There was this magical and emotional connection to their guitar. If Hendrix didn't play it exactly like *Electric Ladyland*, why should we?"

"PEOPLE WANT TO SKIP THE FUNDAMENTALS AND GO STRAIGHT TO THE SWEET CHILD O' MINE SOLO"

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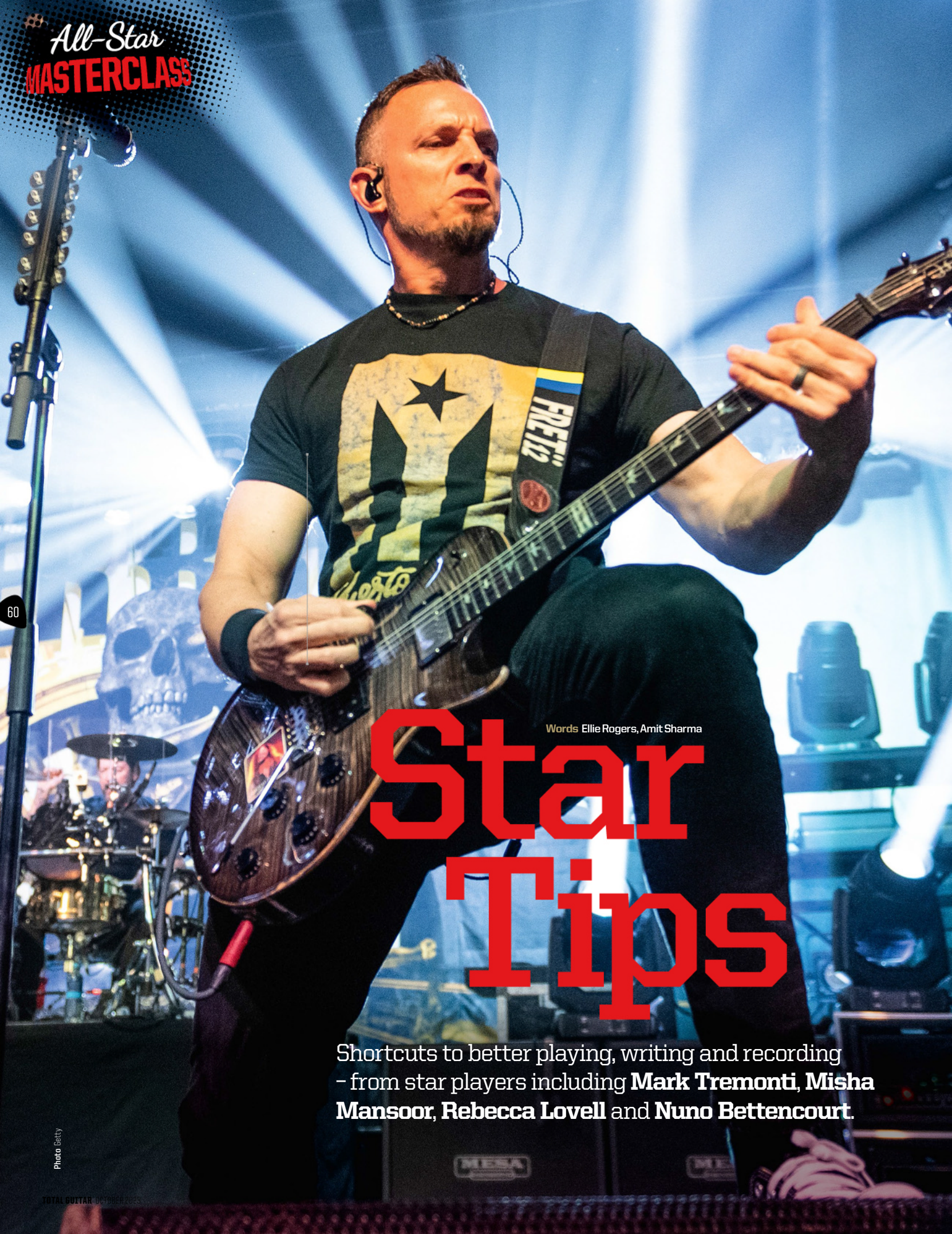


Photo Getty

Star Tips

Words Ellie Rogers, Amit Sharma

Shortcuts to better playing, writing and recording – from star players including **Mark Tremonti**, **Misha Mansoor**, **Rebecca Lovell** and **Nuno Bettencourt**.

Beating writer's block

Misha Mansoor & Jake Bowen
Periphery

Misha: Sometimes people ask about writer's block, and maybe if you're not the kind of person where staying up late works for your schedule and it's more difficult, just try a different time where you're not all there. Maybe wake up super early. For me, staying up very late sometimes will yield looking at things differently and it's a way to take a different perspective on it.
Jake: It's interesting, when we're writing, because we'll shift our hours. We all keep pretty normal hours, more or less, when we're not doing music stuff. But, when it comes to an album, when we're writing, we'll shift our hours to where we're getting going in the afternoon, and then we'll stay up all night. When it comes to recording and tracking stuff, we go back to a normal schedule because you don't really need to utilise that. Misha used to call it 'The Focus Hour'.

Mic placement

Jamie Hall
Tigercub

A big secret of my sound is DI-ing straight into a console preamp. I doubt I'm the first person to do that. I think it's what Marc Bolan did with all the T. Rex stuff. But a guitar with no amp, basically straight into a preamp, is something that I've always done throughout my career. It's always given this sound, which I think is probably present on all my guitar sounds. Then, another one I've found is a mic placement thing. If you get a '57 on a cab and you go right up to the cloth, it sounds good. You can move it around within that and it sounds great. But, if you move the '57 back a couple of feet until you find the point where all of the air pressure, all of the waveforms converge from each speaker. It's bizarre. You're moving the mic back and it sounds more and more like an amp in the room because there's more ambience, and then you hit this one moment and everything comes right up front and in your face, and it's like you're close mic'ing it. But the microphone is actually three or feet from the cab. That sounds f*cking amazing! That is the best way to mic a cab that's crushingly loud.

Finding your own voice

Rebecca Lovell
Larkin Poe

There's so much material out there on YouTube and instructional websites. From Facebook to Instagram, there's such a bombardment of incredible technical players who have ascended the heights of musicianship and theoretical knowledge, it can sometimes feel demoralising for others. I might go and watch Zakk Wylde play and think to myself, 'How is this humanly possible, how is he physically doing this?' For the rest of us mere mortals, my advice would be to exist in your own lane. Find your own power and have a less is more approach, if that's what you are looking for. Always try to let your personality come out in your playing instead of just ripping. Yeah, we all need to continue growing as players and work on technique as far as speed and precision, but it's also important to remember the guitar should be fun. It should have attitude. You should let that carry you away at times, not at the expense of technicality or getting yourself off the hook by playing easy stuff. There's a lot of power in that punk sensibility. Just let it be brute and simple. Let your guitar speak for itself. That's something I've been working hard on in recent years – embracing my own playing. Because, of course, I live in a household with an incredibly gifted guitarist [husband Tyler Bryant]. I learned I have to find my own lane and be comfortable in it. That's been a huge turning point for my own soloing.

Zakk Wylde
Black Label Society, Ozzy Osbourne, Pantera

Just play what you love and stick with what moves you. I remember reading an interview with Johnny Winter when I was younger where he was asked if he'd tried playing anything other than blues, like experimenting with classical or jazz. He said the only thing that moved him was the blues, so that's why he stuck with it. If you play what moves you and what you love, then that's what you're most likely to excel at. I always thought it was weird when people say you should learn how to play piano to help you play guitar. That's like saying you should learn violin because that will help you with the bass… That never translated to me. If you love piano, play that. If you don't have much interest in it, then no, it won't make you a better guitarist.

Songwriting

Mark Tremonti & Myles Kennedy
Alter Bridge

Mark: I never listen to other bands for song stuff. I like to get away completely from everything. If anything, I'll go on YouTube and there's these meditative things for people to put on while studying – cool background things. They sound almost like you're in the womb or something. Each one of them has a different kind of vibe and you can write with those going on. There's no drumbeat, there's no chord changes, there's just a key. Those are fun to write to.

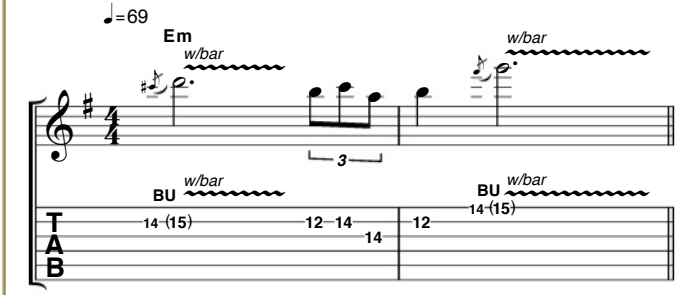
Myles: There was a lesson I learned when making one the very first records I did for a major label, with a band called The Mayfield Four. We were working with this guy called Jerry Harrison who is the guitar player for Talking Heads. He said something that has really stuck with me for the last 25 years. We were talking about getting in the studio, and at the time – this is going to show how long ago it was – *OK Computer* by Radiohead was coming out, and I was a massive Radiohead fan. So I told him I was going to go to the store and get that record. This was back when you'd go to a store to get records! He was like, 'Don't do that. Wait until we're done making this record because it'll end up influencing you.' That really stuck with me. You have to keep it self contained and don't let yourself feed off other things during this part of the process. Then when I'm done, I allow myself to listen to whatever I can get my hands on.

Pedalboard configuration

Scott Reynolds
CLT DRP

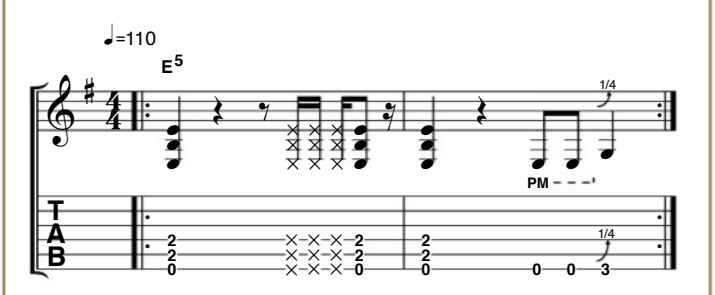
I wouldn't say there's any strict rules. Experimentation and trying things for yourself is always good. With drives and overdrives, some pedals are going to have more headroom than others. So find out which has more headroom, and put that after. If it's the other way around, when you chuck that on, it can squash the sound. I've found that with my fuzz and my overdrive. I don't know why, but wahs and stuff like that seem to be better nearer the beginning, before my drives. I like delays pre- and post. It depends on what I want. Sometimes it's nice to have the distortion delay, and sometimes if you do that Edge stuff with the dotted eighth delay or one note delay stuff, you want that to be really precise.

WRITING OVER A PAD bit.ly/tg376audio



For our example we have created an E minor pad to solo over. As per Mark Tremonti's advice there is no drum beat or chord changes to navigate. This frees up the creative process and it is fun to noodle ideas over this pad. We've included the backing track so you can try both our example and some ideas of your own.

USING STACKED DRIVES bit.ly/tg376audio



Our CLT DRP style example combines fuzz and overdrive to create a 'stacked' drive effect. We plugged straight into the fuzz then added extra overdrive after. Our riff is relatively easy, but sounds great with the drums. The trick here is to play the riff with rhythmic accuracy and let the stacked drive tone do the rest!

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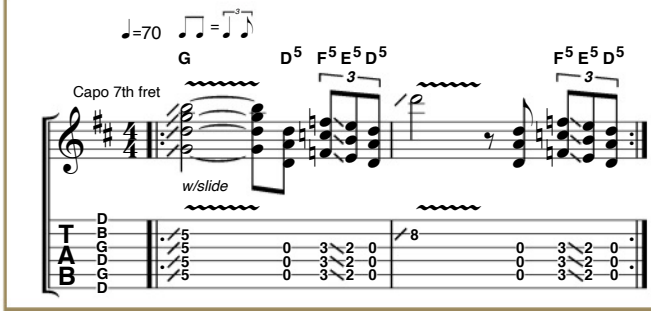
Slide tips for beginners

Erja Lyytinen

It took time for me to master the technique. Muting the strings that you are not playing is essential in the beginning. You could have a simple song – maybe even a kids' song – and just try to get each note sounding lovely. By the same token, you need to be relaxed with your hands – not stiff. At first, you want to work on getting each note to sound at the right pitch, and then when you've mastered that, you can let those other strings ring if you need them for effect. I use open tunings, so if I play in Open D or Open G I have different guitars. Or, if I need a different key, I just use capos. Sometimes it's very cool if you're playing a blues solo in D, you can just let all of those strings ring.

CAPO'D OPEN-G TUNED SLIDE LICK IN D bit.ly/tg376audio



Our slide example combines open G tuning with a capo at the 7th fret to place us in the key of D major. Our tab shows the concert pitches in the notation and the fret positions of the slide treating the 7th fret capo as the zero fret. As per Erja's tips, be sure to line the slide up directly over the frets to ensure good intonation.

Arranging

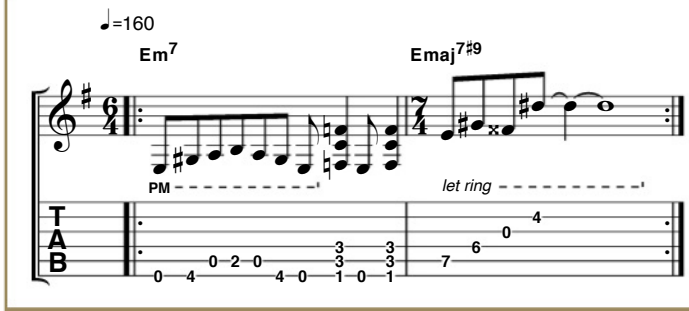
John Petrucci
Dream Theater

I got turned onto prog rock through bands like Rush and Yes. What they were doing was different to what else was going on in regular rock or metal. The players were more technical and they'd have extended solos. It wasn't about the pop or concise side of music, it was more about experimenting and bringing in more musicianship to blow the song structure thing out of the water. If you want to have a four-minute intro to your song or write something that's 15 minutes long, that's fine!

The term progressive rock has expanded exponentially over the last 20 years. You used to be able to say prog rock was a certain thing but it's really started to evolve splinter. You can call Radiohead prog and you can call Meshuggah prog, yet they sound nothing alike.

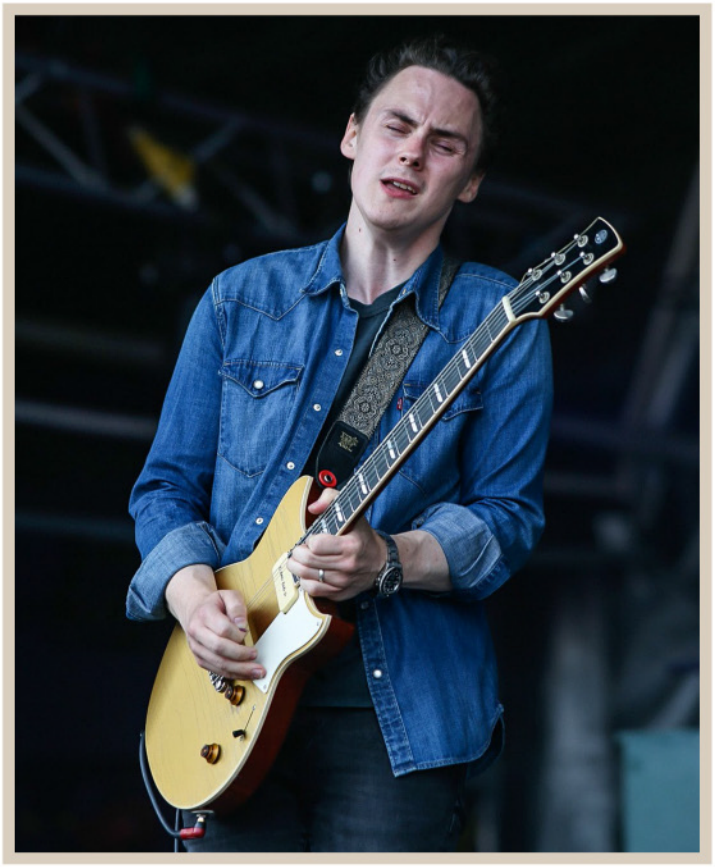
When I listen to symphonic music, certain pieces feel very proggy. If you take the title track from our album *A View From The Top Of The World*, it has various movements over 21 minutes or so just like a classical symphony would. Those vary in mood, tempo and time signatures and yet there are melodic themes that go throughout and reoccur, coming back in different ways every time – that's a very classical thing to do. The musicians are required to be able to play whatever the composer had in mind, from things that are super sensitive to something bombastic and really fast or technical. We put the same requirements on ourselves.

MOOD, TEMPO, TIME SIGNATURES, THEMES bit.ly/tg376audio



We can't possibly cover the movements of a 20-minute epic here, but we can take a look at some of Petrucci's techniques. Our riff shifts in mood from heavy rock to lighter, mellower sounds as the time signature changes from six to seven beats in the bar. Experiment by expanding these ideas into longer sections.

Photos Getty



Tone

Chris Buck
Cardinal Black

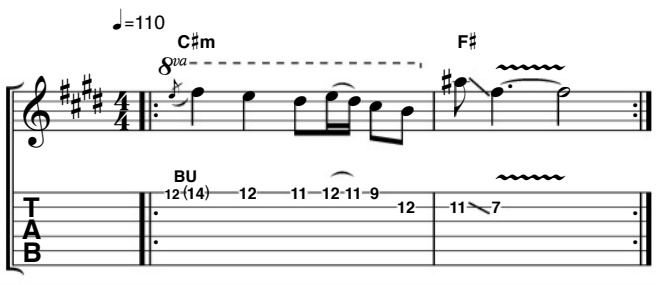
Every part of the signal chain – whether that starts with your fingers, or whether that starts with the pickups – is very much integral. I get a lot of comments on YouTube saying that I sound exactly the same whatever I'm plugged into, and I think a massive part of that is because my hands just sound a certain way. I'm a fairly aggressive player and I'm fairly tactile. I play a lot with my fingers on my right hand. So, straight away there's quite a touch responsive thing to my playing, which you probably wouldn't get as much if it was exclusively the pick.

Alternate picking

Nuno Bettencourt
Extreme

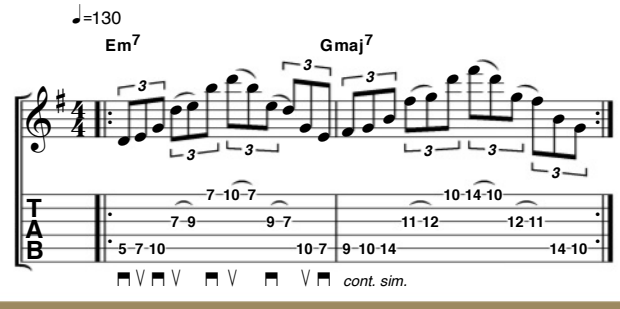
I remember many years ago someone telling me that I was skipping strings a lot, or changing how I picked on each one. Usually, people play straight scales, runs or arpeggios. I always like to skip and bounce around. Being a fan of Al Di Meola and Yngwie Malmsteen, it would always be super smooth or very percussive, with no in-betweens. Eddie Van Halen did it a lot as well, firing up those runs in less mechanical ways, almost like how a violinist would go from soft to hard. You don't have to pick every note. There's no medal for it. Who cares if you pick everything? When I break it down, I'm only picking every two out of six, or four out of six. Zakk Wylde would always tell me, 'None of us are reinventing anything, really!' But he'd say we're all making our own soup. His might have more ZZ Top and swing. Mine might have Al Di Meola; Brian May is in there, too. Yngwie has his influences, too – he's influenced by Uli Jon Roth and Ritchie Blackmore. But we all have our own flavours.

FINGERSTYLE LEAD bit.ly/tg376audio



Our Chris Buck-style example uses the fingers of the picking hand for a more expressive touch. It also maximises the dynamics in your delivery and, some will say, makes for the best tone. Our melody is relatively easy to play and the notes follow the underlying chords.

MIXING PICKING AND LEGATO bit.ly/tg376audio



Our Nuno-style example combines string skipping with a mixture of alternate picking and hammer-ons and pull-offs, and this is the secret of Nuno's fast playing. The string-skipped arpeggios are challenging at first, but keep at 'em – they're useful shapes that provide a gateway to shred.

Photo DeclanBlackall

Less is more

Jakub Zytecki

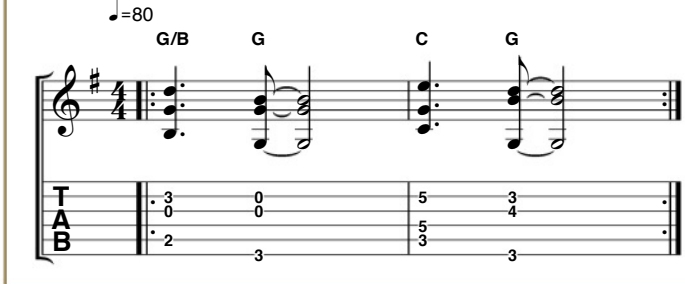
It's not a rule but, very often things sound better when there's less in the arrangement and in the mix. I feel like the more you deal with the creative process and the more you write, the more you tend to go towards minimalism. You're trying to say a lot, but through a minimal set of notes.

Playing slower

Richie Faulkner
Judas Priest

For me, it's always about what I'm saying, rather than how many notes I'm playing. Some of the best guitar players, or my favourite guitar players – like Michael Schenker, David Gilmour and Brian May – they've always been that kind of guitar player. Even Kirk Hammett of Metallica, who was a bit faster back in the day, always had some kind of motif you could latch on to and sing along to. That's something I always want to recreate. Your fingerprint comes across more when you slow it down and play some melodies, rather than a sh*t-ton of notes.

RIFF WITH "A MINIMAL SET OF NOTES" bit.ly/tg376audio



Our minimalist example is based on ambient tracks like *Grow Up*. Here we let the reverb and delay do the work. Some simple three-note chords are plucked with the fingers and the delay is set to the quarter-note pulse, which throbs along in time. This pattern can be built upon with more lead lines added and layered up.

HOOK-BASED RIFFING bit.ly/tg376audio

Our Judas Priest-inspired example runs with Richie's advice to creative strong melodies and hooks. It's the kind of simple, catchy riff you'll hear on Priest tracks such as *Breaking The Law*.

Photos Getty

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BLUR

COFFEE & TV

"Ridiculous" chords and a solo that's near-impossible to recreate. "If you work it out," guitarist Graham Coxon once told TG, "then send me a copy!"

Photo Getty **Words** Henry Yates **Guitars and backing** Simon Young

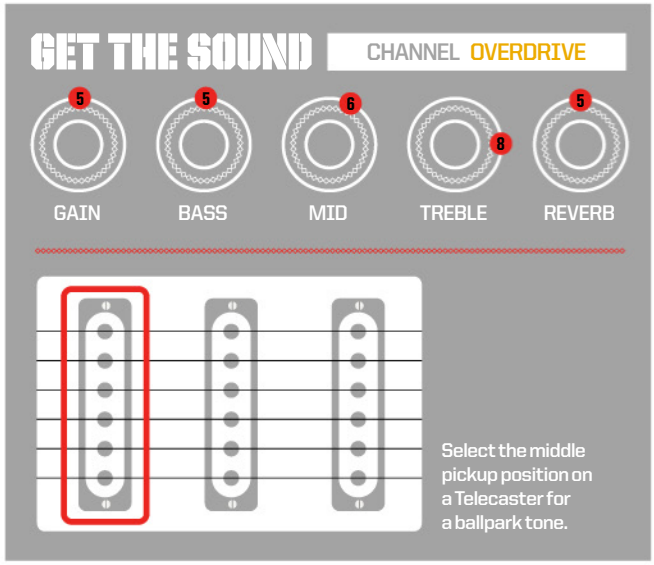
Coffee & TV is a sunkissed pop classic built on a thunking Tele rhythm. The song kicks off in earnest with the chunky chording at 0:14. "It's that thing of updating cheesy cliches; I like doing that," Coxon told TG back in 2012. "That rhythm is very old. I think it's really a Simon & Garfunkel kind of rhythm."

The chords themselves, he says, "...are just ridiculous. They're unusual. They're sort of minor chords played against major chords."

But it's the effects-laden solo freakout that takes the weirdness biscuit. "I was just stamping on anything," he says. "I don't even remember which pedals. I just did that and thought, 'Pfft, that'll do for now, but it's a bit ropey', and put it aside."

SOUND ADVICE

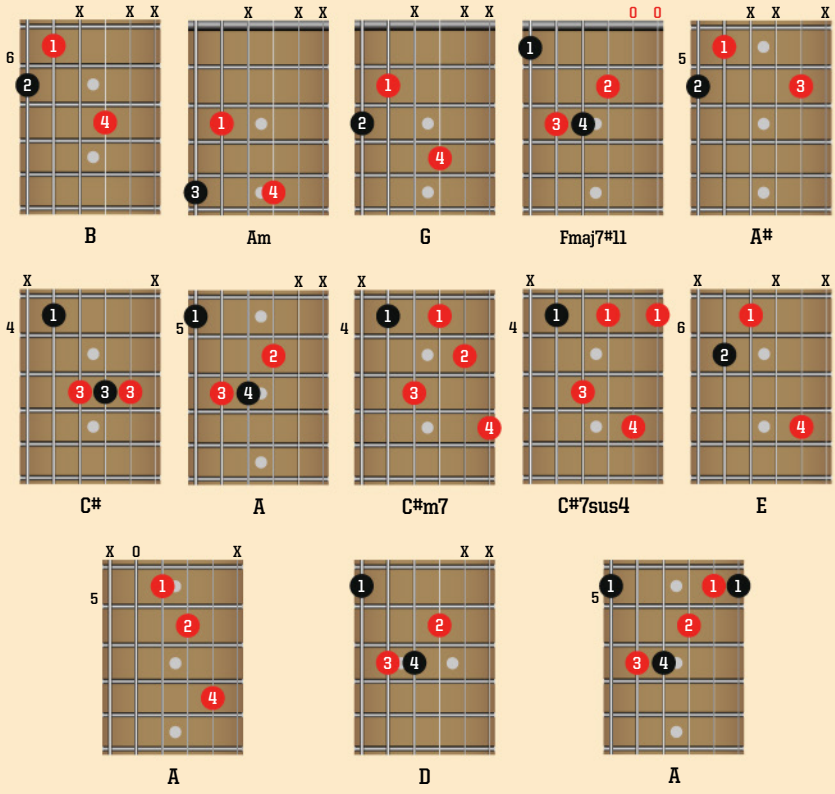
Everything you need to know before playing *Coffee & TV*



The bright, cutting tone of the rhythm parts bears all the hallmarks of Coxon's '50s reissue Telecaster set to the middle pickup position. Single-coil pickups are therefore a must. Coxon remembers tracking with the Tele into a Marshall Plexi, but admits he couldn't replicate the solo if he tried. "I think there's a bit of Boss tremolo on there, there's definitely some vibrato at times, a couple of [ProCo] Rats that were on at the same time, lots of distortion, the odd squeak of feedback." Needless to say, this is a case where you can feel free to experiment to your heart's content.

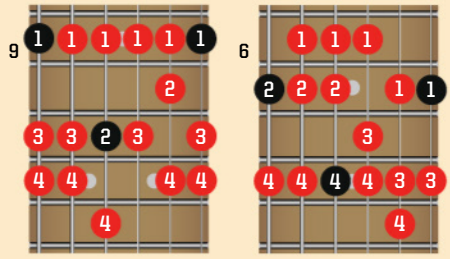
CHORDS

Generally, Coxon's rhythm playing in the song either features octave melodies or partial chords that are made up of the root note and the 3rd interval. The E, G, Am, A# and B shown here are examples of these partial chords, so the shapes may be unfamiliar to you at first. The remainder of the chords that make up the tune are simple moving barre chord shapes rooted on the fifth or sixth string.



SCALES

Given that the chord progression in the main solo features harmonically unrelated chords it's hard to recommend a particular scale. The best course of action is to try to follow the chord progression and pick out notes from these chords. Or follow Coxon's example and go for more random notes, slow sustained bends and mad squeals! The C# natural minor scale will work over the chorus chords, while the B Mixolydian mode is best for the outro section. However, make sure to change the D# used in the Mixolydian mode to D natural over the D chords if you choose to play over them.



BLUR
COFFEE & TV

FULL TAB

COFFEE & TV
Words and Music by Damon Albarn, Steven Alexander James, Graham Coxon and David Rowntree
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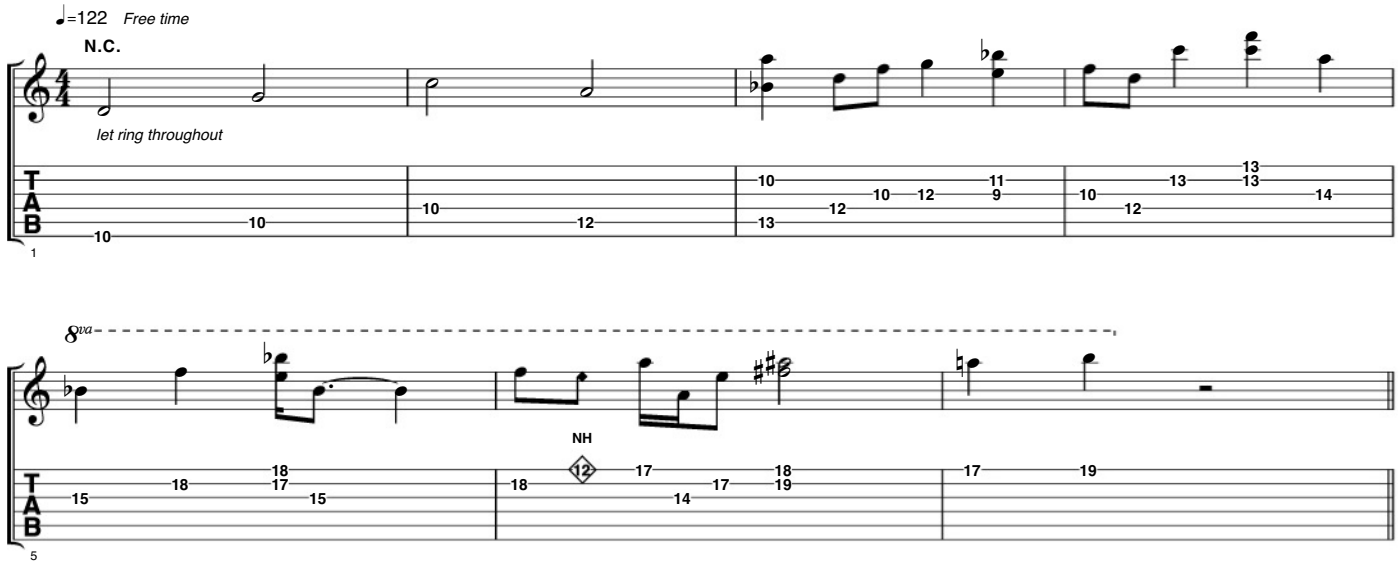
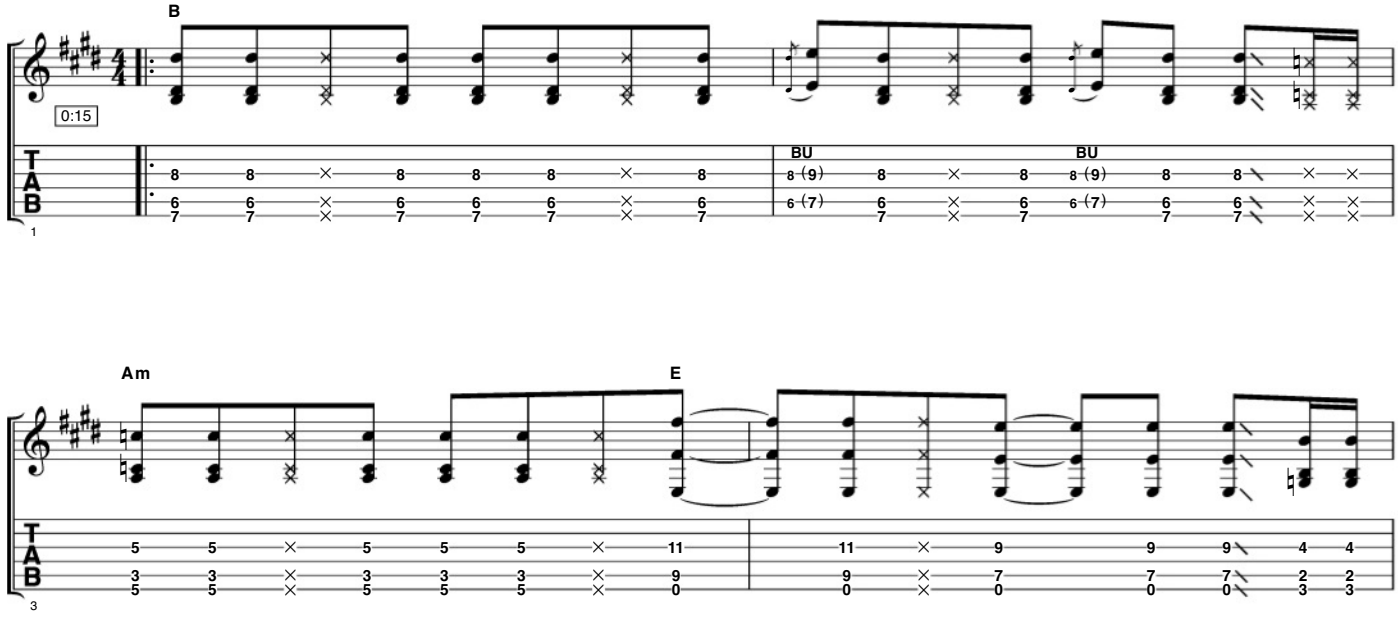
BLUR COFFEE & TV **Intro (delay effects)** **bit.ly/tg376audio**



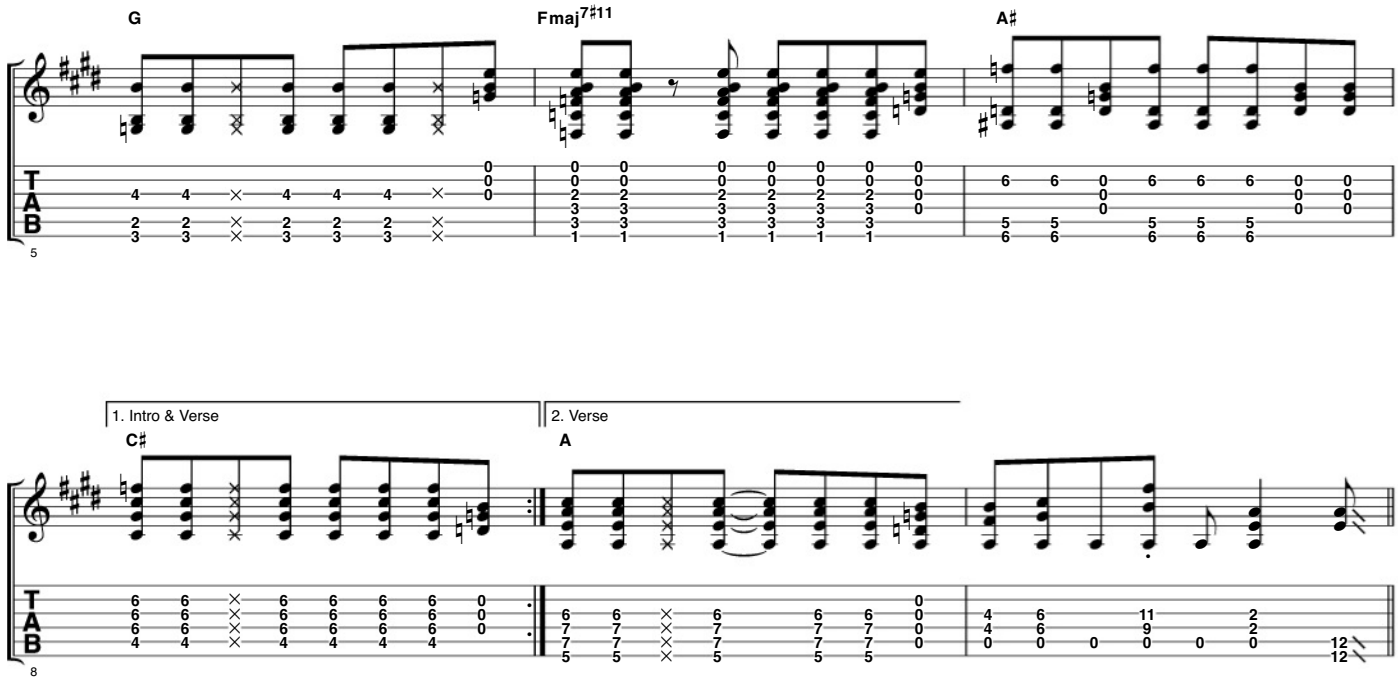
For this intro, producer William Orbit fed some of Coxon's random noodlings into a delay unit that alters the speed and pitch of the repeats, making this an essentially unrepeatable line – hence the tab is a rough representation for one guitar of this effect. Try to let the notes ring out over each other for as long as possible.

BLUR COFFEE & TV **Verse** **bit.ly/tg376audio**



BLUR COFFEE & TV Verse (cont'd)

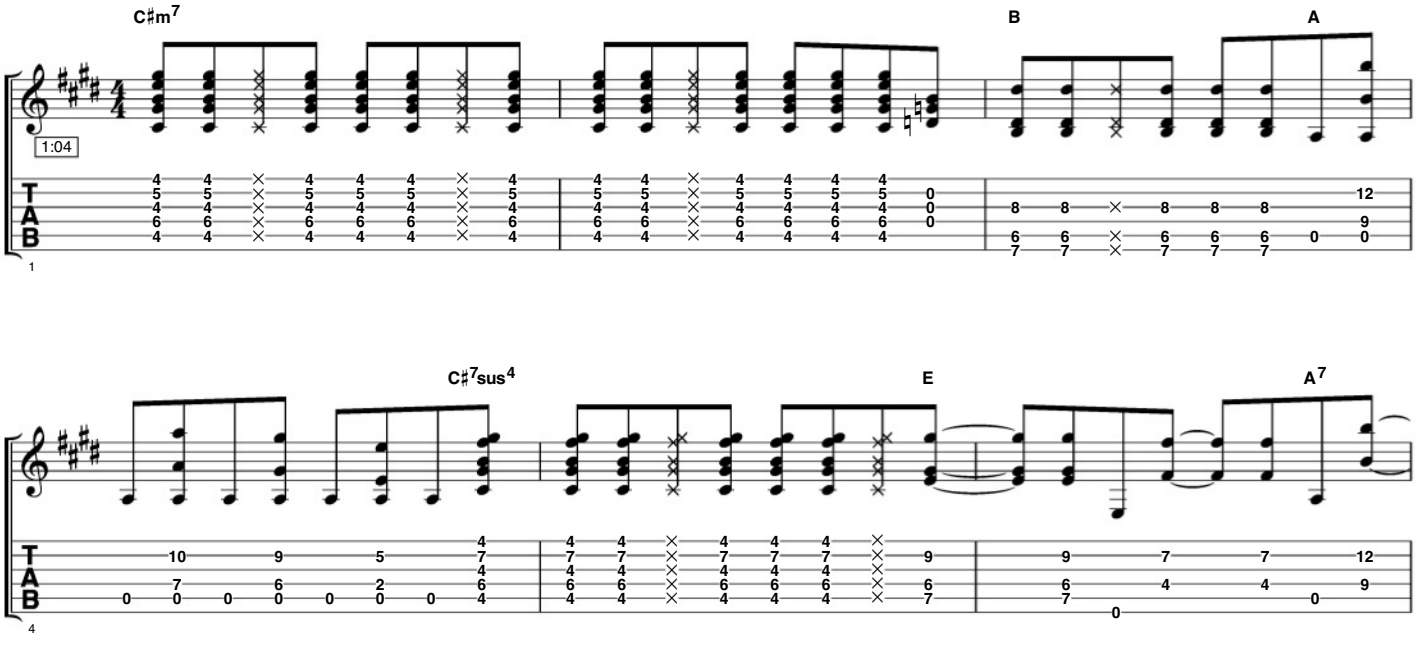
bit.ly/tg376audio



Use a constant, relaxed alternate picking movement, lifting your fingers just off the fretboard to silence the strings on the muted notes (marked 'X' in the tab). Fret all the octaves on the fifth and third strings with your first and fourth fingers. This leaves your second and third fingers free to play the sixth string.

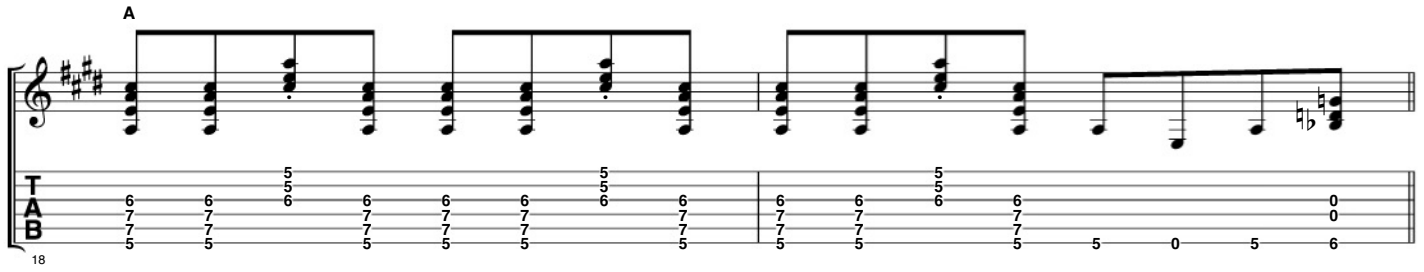
BLUR COFFEE & TV Chorus

bit.ly/tg376audio



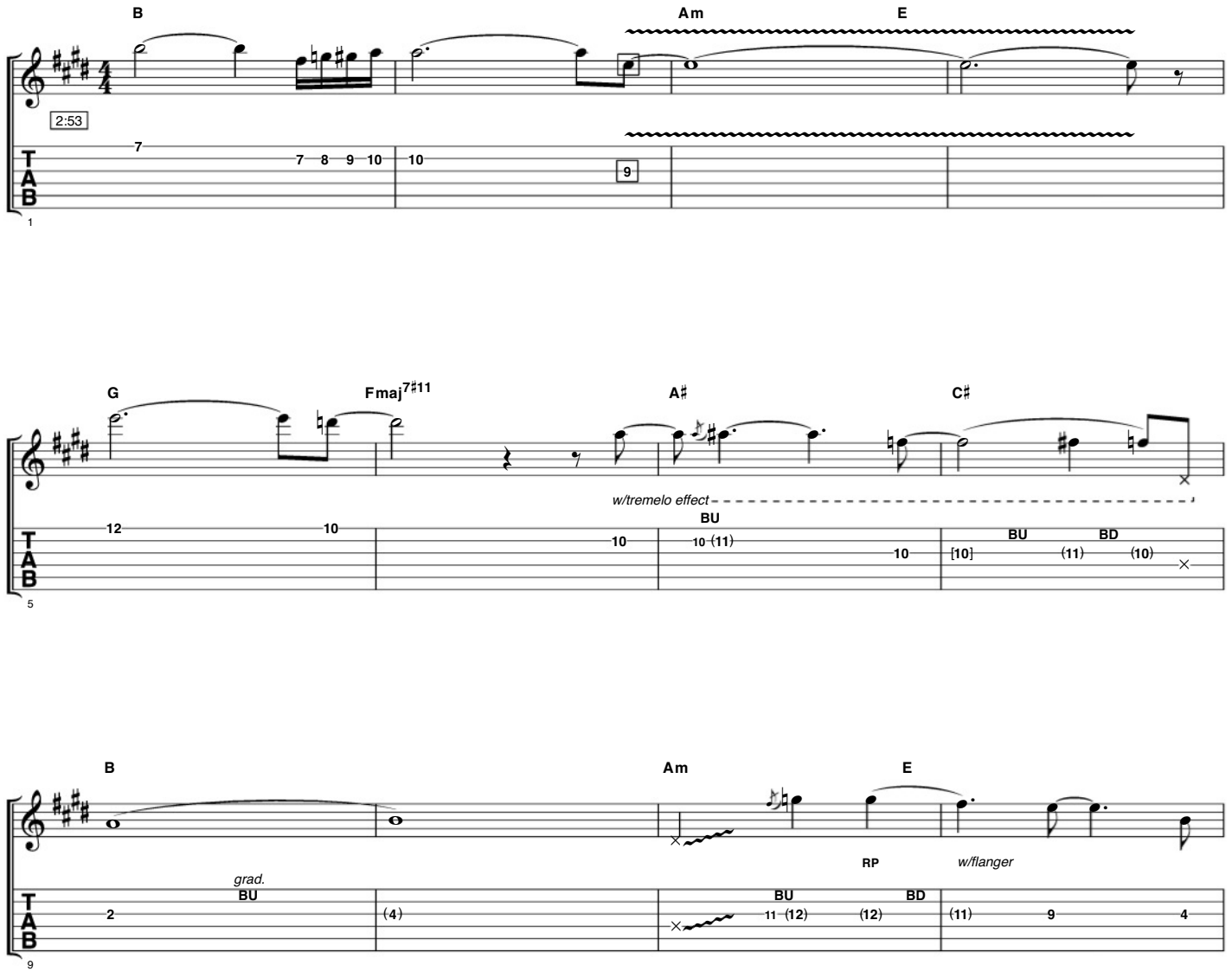
BLUR COFFEE & TV Chorus (cont'd) **bit.ly/tg376audio**

BLUR COFFEE & TV Chorus (cont'd) **bit.ly/tg376audio**

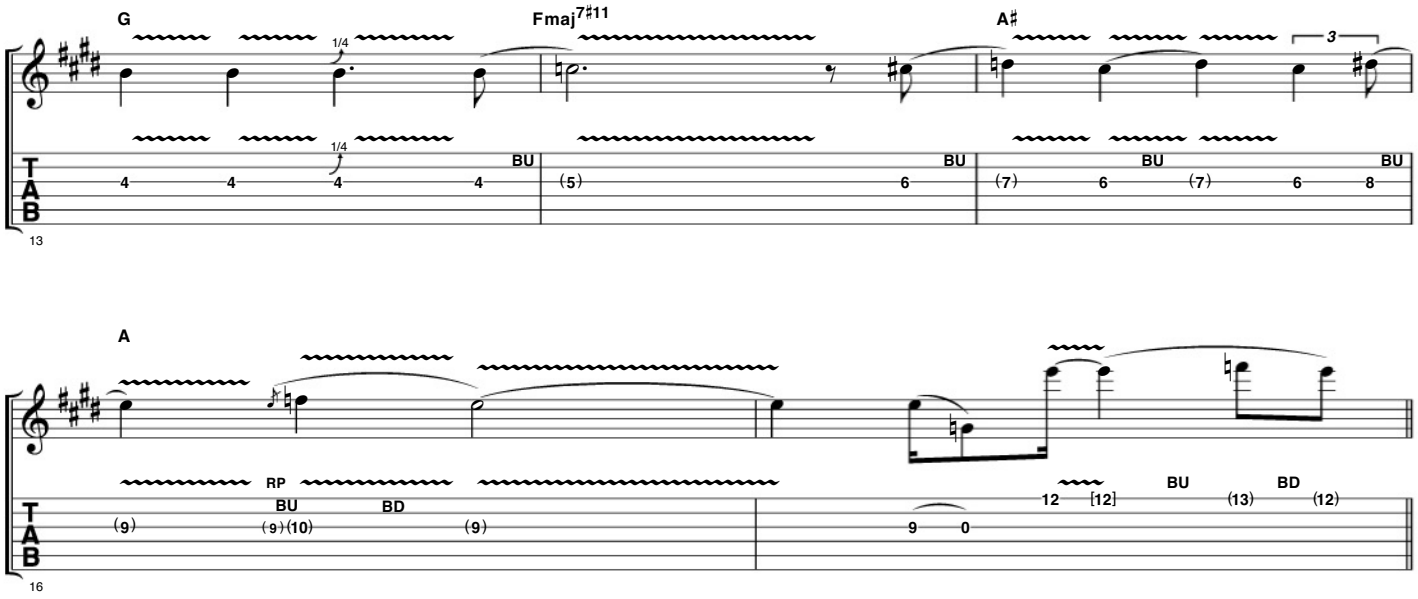


Once again, use relaxed alternate picking to play this part, fretting the octaves with your first and fourth fingers. The octave melodies in bars 3, 4, 6 and 7 are all played on the offbeats, so use a strong upstroke to accent them.

BLUR COFFEE & TV Solo 1 **bit.ly/tg376audio**

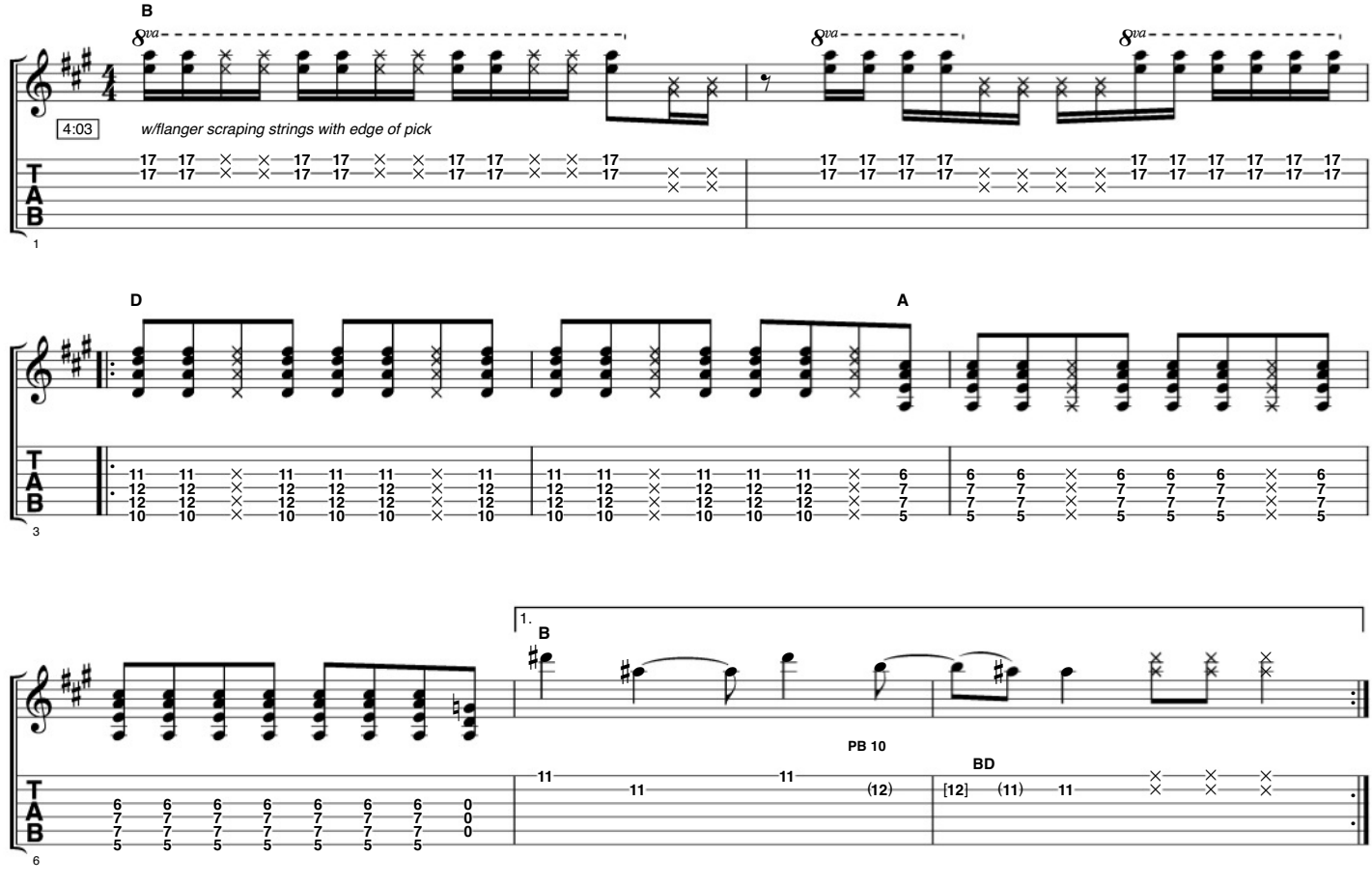


BLUR COFFEE & TV Solo 1 (cont'd) **bit.ly/tg376audio**



This solo is as much about the fuzz sound and effects as it is about the notes, which aren't necessarily the most obvious ones to choose. For the last note in bar 2, use your second finger to hammer on without picking the string. Use a fierce vibrato from bar 13 to the end.

BLUR COFFEE & TV Outro solo **bit.ly/tg376audio**



BLUR COFFEE & TV Outro solo (cont'd) **bit.ly/tg376audio**

The outro phrases feature bursts of heavily processed snippets of Coxon freaking out on guitar. This is a composite part of the rhythm guitars playing simple barre chords and the processed lead work. Bars 1 and 2 have barely any discernible pitch, and are essentially just rhythmic string scrapes.

OPEN-MIC SONGBOOK

NIRVANA
ALL APOLOGIES

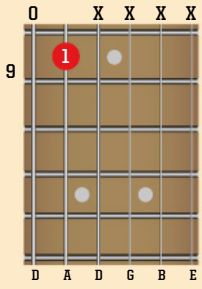
Drop your low E to D, dial in some distortion and make some noise with this grunge classic from 1993's *In Utero*

With much of the track following a riff and distorted powerchords, this classic from Nirvana's *In Utero* album may not be an obvious strummer. However, the implied chords are simple and it's an easy tune to jam around, with or without the riff. Not convinced? Check out Pat Smear's strummed acoustic accompaniment on the band's *MTV Unplugged* album and accompanying concert film.

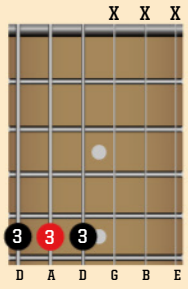
If you tackle *All Apologies* on electric guitar, Cobain was famously seen performing the (then unreleased) track with a Fender Strat at the band's legendary 1992 Reading Festival show. A neck position single coil pickup is suitable for the clean and distortion sounds alike – though you may prefer a more conventional bridge humbucker. Kurt's amps ranged from Randall and Mesa/Boogie heads, Crown power amps, a Fender Twin in the studio, and Marshall cabinets. He was also a pedal fanatic, the most-used on his 'board being the Boss DS-1 and DS-2 distortions and Electro-Harmonix Big Muff. We'd suggest using a Fender Twin Reverb for a basic clean sound and perhaps stacking Big Muff and DS-1 type distortions.

CHORDS

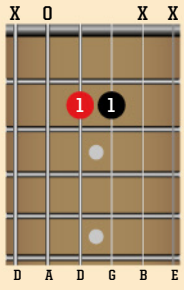
With much of the track outlined by the riff there are only a few chords to play. The D shown here is your start point for the riff, but you could strum an open D chord if you like. The part was played by Kurt on a drop C#-tuned guitar (C# G# C# F# A# D#). This is the same as drop D (DADGBE), but with all six strings detuned by one further semitone. We've kept our audio track, tab and song sheet in drop D for convenience.



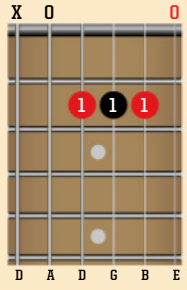
D



G5



A5



A

ALL APOLOGIES
Words and Music by Kurt Cobain
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Guitars and backing Milton Mermikides **Photo** Getty

Backing track (bit.ly/tg376audio)
This song comes with a backing track. Enter the above link into your web browser of choice; press play and jam along, guitaraoke style!

SONGSHEET

All Apologies

Intro
D / / / / / / / x4

Verse 1
D
What else should I be?

All apologies

What else could I say?

Everyone is gay

What else could I write?

I don't have the right

What else should I be?

All apologies

Chorus 1
G5
In the sun

In the sun I feel as one

In the sun

In the sun
A5
Married

Buried

Verse 2
D
I wish I was like you

Easily amused

Find my nest of salt

Everything is my fault

I'll take all the blame

Aqua sea foam shame

Sunburn freezer burn

Choking on the ashes of her enemy

Chorus 2
G5
In the sun

In the sun I feel as one

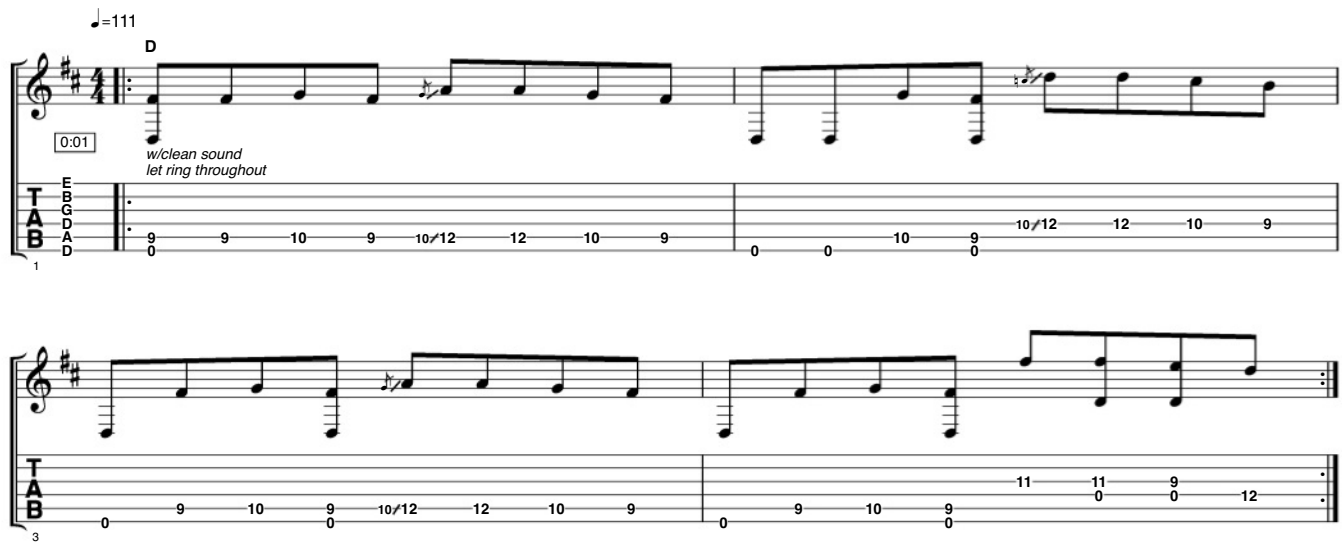
In the sun

In the sun
A5
Married
A
Married
A5 A
Married
A5
Buried

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

Outro
D
All in all is all we are (To Fade)

NIRVANA ALL APOLOGIES. Intro / verse **bit.ly/tg376audio**



Nailing this intro section allows you to play most of the track. Take a look through the tab and identify the open-string bass notes to make sure you're hitting them at the right time. Try practising the line without the bass notes to begin with, and add them in later.

THE GAS STATION

REAL WORLD REVIEWS OF THE BEST NEW GEAR

Welcome to the GAS (Gear Acquisition Syndrome*) Station! Every issue, TG scours the market for the hottest new gear and brings you transparent reviews that you can trust. From the smallest of accessories that make your life easier, to big investments, such as brand new guitars, amps and effects pedals – if it's worth your attention, you'll find it here!

HOW WE TEST

CURATION
Our product selection is driven by our love of gear. We select the most exciting products on the market every month to bring you opinions you can trust.

FACE-VALUE REVIEWS
We're not gear snobs here at *Total Guitar*. We judge it on whether it looks good, sounds good and plays well – not by the name on the headstock.

***WHAT IS GAS?**
Gear Acquisition Syndrome is the guitar-player's never-ending urge to acquire new gear, irrespective of whether they actually need it. Don't pretend you don't have it – we all do!

NO SNAKE OIL
You won't find us getting hung up on hokey mythology or nonsense marketing speak: we aim to bring you bullsh*t-free opinions on the gear you're interested in.

WE CAN'T BE BOUGHT
TG review scores are a true reflection of our experts' opinion on the product they've been testing. You'll never find a rating in our mag that has been bought and paid for.

REAL WORLD REVIEWS
We test every product under the conditions that they were designed for. For example, if an amp is designed to be played loud, rest assured that we'll have tested it at rehearsal/gig volumes!

BEST BUY AWARD
TG Best Buy Awards are reserved for stand-out products that earn a 4.5 star overall rating. This is the most exciting new gear that you *need* to check out

PLATINUM AWARD
Reserved for the very best of the best, TG's Platinum Awards are given to class-leading, gamechanging products that score a maximum 5 stars in every category.

SUPERB, A BEST BUY	EXCELLENT	ABOVE AVERAGE KIT	SOME ISSUES	POOR
★★★★★	★★★★½	★★★½	★★½	★½

79 START ME UP
Five new products you need to check out

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PJD makes the case for buying British. We evaluate the evidence...

84 THE TG TEST: LANEY IRONHEART FOUNDRY LEADTOP & DUALTOP HEADS
Laney adds a pair of compact heads to its popular Ironheart Foundry range

90 SQUIER PARANORMAL CUSTOM NASHVILLE STRATOCASTER
Two sonic worlds collide to create a solid gold winner

92 POSITIVE GRID SPARK GO
A tiny, take-anywhere guitar amp that's loaded with innovative tech

94 ELECTRO-HARMONIX ANDY SUMMERS WALKING ON THE MOON FLANGER
Whoop, whoop! It's the sound of The Police

02

04

03

01

05

START ME UP!

Five awesome new products to get your gear engine revving this month...

1 UNIVERSAL AUDIO UAFX

You might think of recording when you hear the name Universal Audio, but the king of merging vintage with digital is keeping one foot on the pedalboard, having just dropped four small stompers. There's classic studio compression (1176), two types of reverb (Evermore Studio Reverb and Heavenly Plate Reverb) and the Echoplex-emulating Orion Tape Delay. Each shares a similar layout, with five controls and multiple modes via a toggle switch, and there are comprehensive bypass options.

From £189
www.uaudio.com

2 FUNNY LITTLE BOXES SKELETON KEY

For the follow-up to 2022's Pearl Jam-aping 1991 pedal, FLB are looking to Queens Of The Stone Age. The Skeleton Key isn't a direct clone of any one piece of Josh Homme's gear, nor is it based on one era of the band's tone. Instead, it looks to recreate an average of Homme's notoriously secret sauce, the sound of which lives somewhere in the crease between distortion and fuzz. It's a simple three-control design featuring artwork from QOTSA-affiliate, Boneface. We'll be checking it out soon.

£99
funnylittleboxes.co.uk

3 MIXWAVE: SPIRITBOX MIKE STRINGER

MixWave may be a relative newcomer to the guitar plugin world, but it means business. Joining its Milkman and Benson emulations, as well as its signature plugin for shred hero, Jason Richardson, is the new Spiritbox – Mike Stringer suite. The plugin comprises three amps (Clean, Rhythm and Lead), and five stompboxes (Drive, Reverb, Delay, Ring Mod and Chorus). Plus there's a 4x12" cab with impulse responses of 21 mic positions. It can even transpose your sound for easy tuning changes.

£112
www.mixwave.net

4 IK MULTIMEDIA IRIG HD X

IK Multimedia's I/O solutions continue with this latest version of its iRig. This sleek, one-knob, compact audio interface makes getting your sound into a phone, tablet or computer easier than ever. New features include a low-noise, high-dynamic range input, USB-C bus-powering from your device, an onboard tuner, and the loopback function means that you can patch the audio straight into any app as an input for mobile recording. It even comes with a copy of AmpliTube.

€129.99
www.ikmultimedia.com

5 GIBSON GREENYBUCKER SET

What's more legendary than a Gibson P.A.F. humbucker? The ones in Peter Green's (now, Kirk Hammett's) Greeny Les Paul. But, if you want a piece of that iconic tone without shelling out for a new guitar, Gibson has come to the rescue. The Greenybucker set offers the same pickups found in the recent US-made production model, complete with the out-of-phase neck pickup. In isolation, you're on the P.A.F. to tonal righteousness. Flip to the middle position for that 'Greeny' sound.

£319
www.gibson.com

PJD GUITARS YORK STANDARD £1,299

PJD makes the case for buying British. We evaluate the evidence...

Founded in 2010 by Leigh Dovey, York-based PJD Guitars began getting attention for their single-cut Carey models, followed by their best-selling St John offset, a few years back via UK stockists like Guitar Galleries and Andertons. Unlike many UK makers, Leigh's ambition lies in the production electric guitar, not the high-end, one-off custom world and they built around 400 guitars in 2022.

For this year, along with setting up a new manufacturing space, PJD, who now have a staff of nine, have reconfigured their range – which is where our York Standard comes in. The previous Standards – the entry point to the range – were well-received but were sailing close to £2,000. As you can see, the *new* Standards are priced very aggressively for a UK-made guitar.

> "ONE OF THE BEST GUITARS WE'VE PLAYED THIS YEAR"

The York is a new outline too for PJD, a design that Leigh tells us "…has literally been a guitar outline on my computer for about six years. I kept tweaking it and thinking 'that's it!', but then the next day I'd be, no, I'm not happy with that, I'll come back to it in a couple of months. I tried different pickup configurations, visually, and then finally I got to the stage, okay I'm going to have to make one and see what it looks like."

While the previous Standards had a lightweight chambered body, the new versions are solidbody but retain the light weight by using obeche. In fact, at 2.55kg (5.61lb), ultra-lightweight might be a better description. Known for their impressive quarter-sawn roasted maple necks, the new Standard swaps to industry-standard flat-sawn maple with a slight tint. It's marginally slimmer in width, more like a regular Fender if we're honest, with a fairly mainstream-feeling shallow C profile, but the fretwork remains first class using a Jescar medium wire. Instead of the slightly compound radius of the previous models, here we get a standard 10" radius; set-up is perfect and our York retains a very resonant and lively response, typical of PJD's previous builds we've played.

Now, any new shape will always be a challenge to us oh-so-conservative customers, but the York is very functional: the heel area, for example, is nicely rounded and we get well-shaped forearm and rib-cage contours that you won't find on its inspiration. The finish too is superbly applied; it's very thin and you can feel the texture of the wood grain through the nitro-cellulose coating. And, as always, PJD use actual bolts, not screws, to fix the neck to the body.

Gotoh hardware is again used on this new Standard and here we get one of the best T-style bridges out there with its 'relaxed' side walls and compensated 'In Tune' brass saddles. The control plate adds to the T-style while the side-placed

1 CONSTRUCTION CHANGES

PJD's previous Standard used a chambered body – with or without a bass-side f-hole. It also came with a roasted maple neck and choice of Bare Knuckle or Cream T pickups. The new Standards, like our reviewed York, employ a solid body made from lightweight obeche.

2 PICKUPS AND WIRING

The York Standard is PJD's first T-style guitar, and it uses their own pickups instead of the aftermarket pickups of the previous Standard models. The circuit is very standard but uses high-quality components like CTS 250k ohms pots, a CRL lever switch and Orange Drop .022uf capacitor.

3 CUSTOM TAILPIECE

Up to this point, PJD's guitars have all used a through-strung, six-saddle Gotoh bridge. Here they stay with Gotoh but it's a T-style bridgeplate with relaxed sides and those nifty 'In-Tune' compensated saddles. It's available with a licensed Bigsby, too, at £1,499.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Obeche

NECK: Maple, bolt-on

SCALE: 25.5" (648mm)

FINGERBOARD: Maple/10" radius

FRETS: 22, medium

PICKUPS: PJD High Tea single coils

CONTROLS: Three-way lever pickup selector switch, master volume and tone

HARDWARE: Gotoh BS-TC1S bridge with brass 'In-Tune' saddles w/ thru body stringing, Gotoh vintage-style SD91 split-post tuners – nickel-plated

FINISH: Ocean Jade Metallic (as reviewed), TV Yellow, Firemist Gold, Candy Apple Red, Midnight Black, Aspen White and Three Colour Sunburst

CONTACT: PJD Guitars www.pjdguitars.com

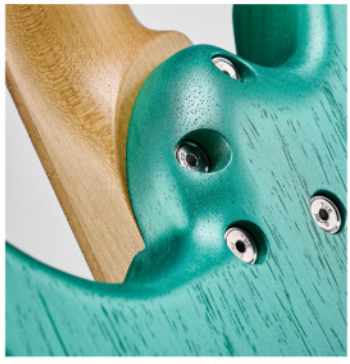
Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

Photography Phil Barker

Lightweight rules!

Say goodbye to boat anchors; British makers are leading the way with lightweight

Classic Teles from the ’50s often used lightweight swamp ash for their bodies. Today that’s increasingly hard to find, and therefore very expensive. Fender have recently toyed with alternatives like roasted pine, while in the boutique world alternatives like paulowina is favoured by makers such as Nik Huber. PJD were introduced to obeche by another British maker, Seth Baccus who uses it for many of his uber-quality builds; it’s also favoured by another fine UK-builder, Atkin. This tropical West African wood is very light in weight and has a plain, pale yellow colour which is easy to work and finish. Typically, it’s plantation grown and is classed as a species of “least concern”.



output jack is mounted on a circular Electrosocket-style plate.

PJD’s pickups are now hand-wound in-house by Josh Parkin and we’ve already seen (and heard) the Dr Wallis set on their Woodford Pioneer and a mean-sounding ’59 P-90 soapbar single coil on the Carey Apprentice. The Alnico V High Tea single coils here certainly aim for a pretty classic Telecaster style in looks, using 42AWG plain enamel wire for the bridge and 43AWG for the neck pickup. The sounds were hear then are right in ‘Teleworld’, but on this platform they have quite an old-school sound, with a crisp, almost acoustic-like fast response – although through a bright amp, certainly at bridge, the high-end needed little taming. The neck pickup is very well-voiced with a slightly smoother high-end response while the mix, as ever, is jangle heaven. These are sounds we’ve heard countless times before, but there’s something special going on here, just like the other PJD guitars we’ve played.

The combination of faultless craft married with a familiar sounding voice makes the York Standard a very credible addition to the well-stocked T-style world: we do have huge choice. The new outline here certainly messes with the iconography of the original but it also signals that PJD ploughs a slightly different path. They’re simple, uncluttered instruments that really are custom-shop in quality but very production in terms of price. Definitely a brand to try but don’t blame us if you fall for its charms. One of the best guitars we’ve played this year.

Dave Burrluck

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	✪✪✪✪✪
SOUND QUALITY	✪✪✪✪✪
VALUE FOR MONEY	✪✪✪✪✪
BUILD QUALITY	✪✪✪✪✪
USABILITY	✪✪✪✪✪
OVERALL RATING	✪✪✪✪✪

ALSO TRY...

FENDER AMERICAN PERFORMER TELECASTER

£1,259

The American Performer Tele features an alder body alongside Tim Shaw-designed Yosemite pickups with a Greasebucket tone control.

VINTAGE V52 PRO SHOP UNIQUE

£1,199

An affordable route to a custom T-style. This Black Icon with Bigsby gives you an idea with its relic’d finish, Wilkinson hardware and pickups and even a kill switch!

GORDON SMITH CLASSIC T

FROM £999

Gordon Smith offer their own T-style which can be custom ordered from their website. You have a lot of choice from body woods, neck and pickups to hardware and finish.

I am music

I live through your moments
Your first shake of the rattle
Your recorder lesson
Your match day anthem
Your queueing anticipation
Your hands in the air
Your main stage mayhem
Your favourite movie scene
Your first dance
Your last night of the proms
Your family singalong
Your swan song.

Musicians' Union

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→ theMU.org

Words Nick Guppy Photography Phil Barker

LANEY IRONHEART FOUNDRY LEADTOP & DUALTOP HEADS

Laney adds a pair of compact heads to its popular Ironheart Foundry range

With a history that stretches back to 1967, Laney's place in the rock universe is assured. Most people would naturally point to London and Liverpool as epicentres for the development of British rock and pop in the mid to late 1960s, but the Black Country area of the West Midlands has an equal claim to fame as the origin for many great bands including Black Sabbath, ELO, the Move, Judas Priest, Slade and many more.

Laney founder Lyndon Laney's involvement in music included playing bass in a collective project called Band Of Joy, which featured a certain Robert Plant as its singer and a drummer known as John Bonham. When Lyndon left performing to focus on manufacturing, his amps quickly achieved fame in the hands of those local bands who used them, most notably Black Sabbath's Tony Iommi, where Laney amps were the foundation of the sound and genre that's come to be globally recognised as heavy metal.

Today, the metal fraternity is well served by Laney's Ironheart range, with a variety of feature-heavy heads and combos including the 120-watt all-valve triple channel IRT120H head and the smaller but equally impressive IRT-SLS 300 head, which uses Class D technology to squeeze 300 watts of power from a highly portable package with an all-valve preamplifier based on a pair of 12AX7's and a long list of performance-honed features.

Back in early spring at this year's re-scheduled NAMM show, Laney added the critically-acclaimed Ironheart Loudpedal, a two-channel preamp stompbox with advanced connectivity and a seriously loud 60-watt power stage, all in a package not that much bigger than two packs of playing cards. Now, Laney are continuing the portable power theme with a pair of compact heads you can lift with one finger, the Leadtop and two-channel Dualtop. Intended to offer the same tightly-defined modern rock sounds as the Loudpedal, but in a more conventional head package, they're likely to appeal to anyone wanting great tones from a compact and portable head that can sit on a bookshelf at home or blast out 60 watts of tone at any size of gig.

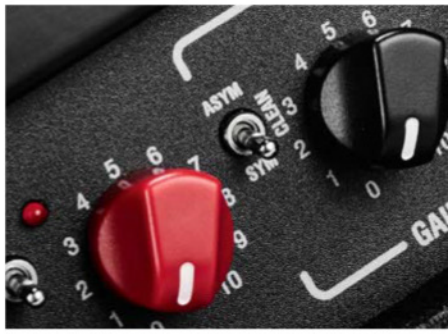
LANEY IRONHEART FOUNDRY LEADTOP HEAD £169

Mini metal mayhem

Laney's Leadtop is probably one of the most compact amp heads you can buy that isn't a toy; essentially it's a stripped down version of the IRF with a single channel and a foot-switchable boost, providing an impressively wide range of sounds from snappy clean rhythm tones to full-on metal. Despite the compact dimensions it's a well-specified and good-looking head that's built to last, with recessed handgrips in a solid MDF sleeve covered in thick black vinyl. Red LEDs behind the front grille light up when power is applied from the laptop-style mains adaptor. The boost works in clean and lead modes, firing into a familiar preamp arrangement of gain, master volume and a three-band passive EQ. A toggle switch lets you select between clean and lead modes, with the gain knob active when lead is selected. Lead mode also activates a toggle switch that gives you flat, dark and bright voicing options. It's a versatile arrangement from a deceptively simple control layout, making it easy to dial in for any type of guitar. Versatility continues on the rear panel, with cabinet-emulated headphones out and aux in sockets, and a fixed level series effects loop where the send socket doubles up as a line out. A single speaker outlet delivers a maximum of 60 watts into an 8-ohm load, with a power reduction switch that drops output down to around one watt for home practice. Hooked up to a suitable speaker cab, the Leadtop easily handles average pub gig volume levels and while you can't footswitch between clean and lead modes, you can set up a clean-ish rhythm tone and use the foot-switchable boost for leads.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Solid-state preamp and power amp
OUTPUT: 60 watts RMS, switchable to approx 1 watt RMS.
DIMENSIONS: 292mm (w) x 184mm (d) x 163mm (h)
WEIGHT: 3.7kg / 8 lb
CABINET: MDF sleeve
CHANNELS: One
CONTROLS: Boost level, boost on/off switch, clean/lead gain switch, bright/natural/dark pre-set voicing switch, gain, volume, bass, middle and treble. Output power select (on rear panel)
FOOTSWITCH: Single-button footswitch (not supplied) toggles boost function
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Transformer-isolated series effects loop (effects send doubles as line out), 60 watt/1 watt power switching, aux in, headphones out
RANGE OPTIONS: The two-channel Dualtop costs £259. There's currently a bundle deal on the Leadtop and matching GS212FE speaker cabinet for £479.
CONTACT: www.laney.co.uk



LANEY IRONHEART FOUNDRY DUALTOP HEAD

£259

Total Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

Compact and bijou

Laney's Dualtop is essentially their critically-acclaimed IRF pedalboard-sized amplifier re-imagined as a compact and very portable twin-channel head. Slightly larger than the Leadtop with the same rugged good looks, the increased real estate of the Dualtop's front and rear panels is put to good use, with two pairs of gain and master volume knobs governing the clean/crunch and lead channels.

Like the Leadtop, there's a footswitchable boost function and a shared three-band passive EQ. The Dualtop also gets onboard reverb, in the shape of Laney's own Black Country Customs Secret Path effect.

The lead channel has the same three-way voicing switch as the Leadtop, with Dark, Bright and Flat options, while the clean/crunch channel offers clean, asymetric and symetric clipping options. The busier rear panel includes a balanced DI output with a ground lift and two high quality IR presets for 1x12 or 4x12 cabinet simulation, together with a bypass option. The rest of the features are similar to the Leadtop, including a footswitch socket, which takes a standard two-button switch and allows remote control of channel switching and the boost function. In use, the Dualtop's extra channel adds extra versatility with the luxury of being able to swap clipping modes for two distinct crunch effects, while Laney's superb Secret Path digital reverb adds a studio-quality ambience.

It may be intended as a metal head, but alongside the Dualtop's incendiary lead channel, the clean channel easily covers everything from snappy country to bluesy crunch sounds.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Solid-state preamp and power amp
OUTPUT: 60 watts RMS, switchable to approx 1 watt RMS
DIMENSIONS: 377mm (w) x 184mm (d) x 178mm (h)
WEIGHT: 5.7 kg / 10.3 lb
CABINET: MDF sleeve
CHANNELS: Two
CONTROLS: Boost level, boost on/off switch, channel one gain, volume, sym/clean/asym clip switch, channel two gain, volume, bright/natural/dark preset voicing switch, bass, middle, treble, reverb level. Ground lift switch, IR select switch, output power select (on rear panel)
FOOTSWITCH: Two-button footswitch (not supplied) toggles channels and boost function
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Transformer-isolated series effects loop, XLR DI out with ground lift and two custom IR's plus bypass, 60 watt/1 watt power switching, aux in, headphones out
RANGE OPTIONS: The single channel Leadtop costs £169. There's currently a bundle deal on the Dualtop head and matching GS112FE cabinet for £349.
CONTACT: www.laney.co.uk

FINAL VERDICT

Two strong contenders from Laney in the portable head arena. Which is right for you?

Size and portability are increasingly important factors to consider for many guitarists when buying a new amplifier, and the new Laney Leadtop and Dualtop amps are a great choice. They're ideal for players who want an affordable amp head which can be used anywhere, either at home or on stage. Both heads offer a wide tonal range that nails modern rock and metal, but with surprising versatility that easily covers many other genres. The Dualtop scores highly here, with a choice of symetrical or asymetrical clipping on its clean/crunch channel, a superb foot-switchable lead channel and the excellent Black Country Custom digital reverb, while the XLR DI out and integrated IR cabinet emulations make it easy to hook up to consoles for live or studio use. Meanwhile, the stripped-down Leadtop makes up for fewer features with ultra-compact dimensions that mean it can find a home anywhere, yet without sacrificing a gutsy sixty-watt output stage that can handle any live gig with power to spare. Whichever one you choose, the Leadtop and Dualtop are ideal portable partners for modern players at all levels, from beginner to pro, with impressively low pricing that won't break the bank, so check 'em out now.

LANEY IRONHEART FOUNDRY LEADTOP HEAD

SUMMARY	
	FEATURES
	SOUND QUALITY
	VALUE FOR MONEY
	BUILD QUALITY
	USABILITY
	OVERALL RATING

LANEY IRONHEART FOUNDRY DUALTOP HEAD

SUMMARY	
	FEATURES
	SOUND QUALITY
	VALUE FOR MONEY
	BUILD QUALITY
	USABILITY
	OVERALL RATING

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SQUIER PARANORMAL CUSTOM NASHVILLE STRATOCASTER

£369

Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

Two sonic worlds collide to create a solid gold winner

They're here. Do not attempt to adjust your television set and do not panic. This gilded hybrid is not a creature from another world or an unexplained apparition; it's merely the latest edition to the ever-popular Squier Paranormal series. Fender purists may want to look away now, as this otherworldly line of guitars twists tradition to conjure up a whole host of unique creations that will leave conformists shaking in their boots.

Viewing the Strat through the lens of a '60s Custom Telecaster, this Nashville model opts for a double-cutaway body that keeps the bound edges, bridge, pickguard and control layout of the Tele while offering players the feel and tone of Fender's '54 icon. The result is a striking guitar that is sure to divide the crowd. While we like the unorthodox styling, we must admit, this design benefits from an in-person viewing.

The chunky nature of the body leads to a comfortable guitar that sits as solid as a rock on our lap, while the slim neck – with 9.5" radius fingerboard – is every bit as playable as we've come to expect from Squier. In fact, we found it hard to put down. Straight out of the box, this glistening gold Strat was set up beautifully and would undoubtedly put some pricier six-strings to shame.

Now, while the look may not be to everyone's taste, its sheer versatility may well win over players less enthused with its radical aesthetic. Loaded with a trio of Fender Alnico pickups – a Tele variant in the bridge and neck and a Strat single coil sandwiched in between – this guitar would most definitely feel right at home in a hit-making studio in the heart of Music City.

We are happy to report that the bright Tele attack is more than present here, and when tuned to open G, this Strat perfectly nails those Keef-inspired chops. Of course, it does just as good a job of reproducing the famously smooth and sultry Strat tones from the likes of John Mayer and SRV.

As if that wasn't enough, the Nashville Strat has a secret weapon hidden within the tone control. This push/pull knob will engage the neck pickup in positions one and two, giving you even more sonic options beyond that typically found on a Strat.

When stitching two models together, you can easily end up with a guitar that is a little confused and lacking its own identity – fortunately, this isn't the case here. Yes, the Custom Nashville Stratocaster may be an amalgamation of two Fender top dogs, and while it certainly isn't an entirely new species, it is an intriguing hybrid that more than delivers on playability and tone.

Daryl Robertson

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★½
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★☆
PLAYABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

1 BODY
Seeing a Strat with sharp edges and none of its trademark curves may put some players off, but this guitar is surprisingly comfortable and well-balanced.

2 PUSH/PULL TONE CONTROL
The ability to add the neck pickup to positions one and two is a game changer for those seeking even more tonal possibilities in the studio.

3 NECK
This slim-feeling maple neck is a standard affair for Squier, but that doesn't mean it isn't great. It's smooth, well finished and very playable.

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Poplar
BODY SHAPE: Stratocaster
NECK: Maple
NECK SHAPE: C
SCALE LENGTH: 25.5"/139.70 mm
FINGERBOARD: Laurel, 9.5" radius
PICKUPS: Fender Designed Alnico Single-Coil
CONTROLS: Master Volume, Master Tone (with Push/Pull)
SWITCHING: 5-way switch
FINISH OPTIONS: Chocolate 2-Color Sunburst and Aztec Gold

Photography Olly Curtis

Positive Grid

1 GO YOUR OWN WAY
It's small enough to take anywhere, and even if you don't have your phone to hand, you can recall four of your favourite presets straight from the amp.

2 'APPY DAYS
A lot of the Spark GO's functionality hinges around the Spark app, which is easy to set up, connect and use.

3 SMART FEATURES
The Spark app can create custom backing tracks, figure out chords, and borrow your phone's camera to record video clips of you playing!

POSITIVE GRID SPARK GO

£129

Guitar PLATINUM AWARD

A tiny, take-anywhere guitar amp that's loaded with innovative tech

Positive Grid's Spark range of amps has changed the game for plugging in and practising, combining digital modelling, effects and audio streaming with its powerful Auto Chords and Smart Jam features. First there was the desktop Spark 40, next came the more portable Spark Mini, and now, we have the Spark GO. This diminutive box serves as a do-it-all practice solution, sharing the same tech spec sheet as the other two, only this time squeezed into a pocket-sized format.

We say squeezed in, but what's really going on here is that the Spark GO's settings are handled by the accompanying Spark app where you can create, edit and save sounds, jam along to music from your streaming service, play to backing tracks, and it even has a video capture function.

Back to the hardware and there's Bluetooth onboard, and control-wise things are kept simple with a button for recalling the four assignable presets stored into the amp, a volume control for your guitar signal and another one for adjusting the volume of incoming Bluetooth sound. The whole lot runs off an internal rechargeable battery which promises around eight hours of use when fully charged.

Getting started is simple – you download the iOS or Android app, pair the amp to your phone and you're away. Then you can start navigating the factory presets, which are made up from 33 amps and 43 effects, arranged into various categories by style. Simply tap and change settings using your phone or tablet's touchscreen.

> "THERE'S PLENTY OF DETAIL WHEN JAMMING TO SONGS"

The first thing we noticed was just how loud the Spark GO can be. Many tiny, battery-powered practice amps are loud, but few sound great. The Spark manages both, filling our room with impressive tone rather than fatiguing spike. This carries over to streaming music via Bluetooth. There's plenty of detail when jamming to songs, and getting a balance between the guitar/Bluetooth signals is a doddle.

Talking of jamming, the Spark app keeps your attention on playing rather than sounds with its AI-driven Smart Jam, and Auto Chords features. The first 'listens' to what you're playing, and delivers a stylised bass/drums beat to match. Auto Chords analyses music you stream to it, and produces a chord chart for you to follow. It's not infallible, and we found that it worked best with simple open and powerchords rather than extended chords, but it's still an impressive tool.

The Spark GO is your amp, effects suite, Bluetooth speaker, jam partner, audio interface and social media video rig all in one! It's hard to think of a more value-packed offering.

Stuart Williams

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
OVERALL RATING	★★★★★

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Ultra-portable practice amp

AMPS: 33

FX: 43

FEATURES: Bluetooth, Auto Chords, Smart Jam, USB audio interface, video capture (via phone)

CONTROLS: Guitar volume, Bluetooth volume, preset button, power/pairing button

DIMENSIONS: 125 x 85 x 45mm

WEIGHT: 346g

POWER: Rechargeable internal battery (8 hours use)

CONTACT: www.positivegrid.com

Photography Olly Curtis

ELECTRO-HARMONIX ANDY SUMMERS WALKING ON THE MOON FLANGER

£129

Guitar BEST BUY AWARD

Whoop, whoop! It's the sound of The Police

Chorus sounds haven't been as popular as they are right now since the 80s, and one of the biggest proponents of the once-ostracised Grand Fromage of modulation sounds is The Police's Andy Summers. But here's the thing: it's one of the worst-kept secrets of guitar tone that Andy's distinctive chorus sounds actually came from an Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress Flanger.

Now, 40-plus years after the song this pedal takes its name from was released, EHX has now honoured Andy Summers with his own signature flanger.

Setup-wise, this is very much a (now-discontinued) Deluxe Electric Mistress with a cool paint job. With three main controls (Color, Range and Rate), plus a dedicated dry output in addition to the regular blended output. The Color control sets the overall intensity of the flanger's icy sweep, while range controls how deep it goes (the higher it's turned up, the more it sweeps into the lower frequencies) and Rate controls how fast the flanger sweeps through its travel. Then there's the Filter Matrix toggle, this takes the LFO out of the flanger circuit, giving us a 'fixed flanger'-type effect.

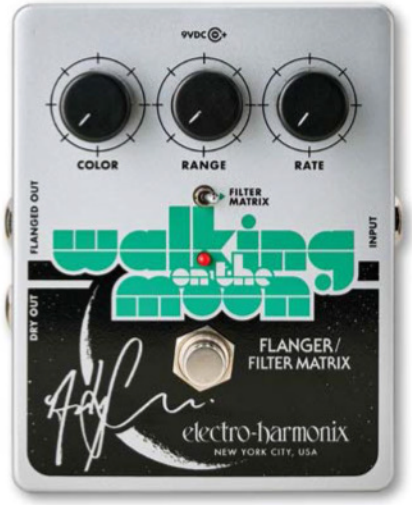
Obviously, our first port of call is to set about getting some Summers-type tones from the WOTM. With a compressor engaged and a clean-ish amp sound, we found them with the Color knob set to somewhere around halfway, the Range dialled in just above and the Rate control set in its slowest third. Here, the sound is less 'jet plane' flanger and more of a liquid-modulation tone.

Being analogue, it's got a richness to its tone that's different to a digital, pristine flanger, and there's a hint of grit, too. This is emphasised by turning up the Color and Range controls, with the former pushing into self-oscillation at its higher settings. It sounds great with some overdrive, with the sweeping glide becoming more apparent.

With the Filter Matrix engaged, the Rate control ceases to function. Instead, you can use the Colour and Range controls to create some unique sounds. Turn the Colour up and sweep around with the Range knob and you'll discover resonant peaks and troughs for some cool out-of-phase tones.

We like the Walking On The Moon for its commemorative, collectable nature. It does what it sets out to do and we don't feel like we're paying a premium either. Remove the Summers connection and there might be more versatile flangers out there for you, but for fans, it's a useful and desirable stomper.

Stuart Williams



AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Analogue flanger pedal

CONTROLS: Color, Range, Rate, Filter Matrix

BYPASS: True bypass

POWER: 9v PSU (included)

CONTACT: www.ehx.com

SUMMARY	
FEATURES	★★★★½
SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★½
BUILD QUALITY	★★★★½
USABILITY	★★★★½
OVERALL RATING	★★★★½

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Words Ellie Rogers

COACH PARTY

If you like rowdy riffs, delirious hooks and believe that a pedalboard should contain at least four different distortion pedals, then Coach Party are a band you'll want to get to know. Following in the footsteps of breakout indie stars Wet Leg, the quartet hails from the Isle of Wight – home to one legendary festival and, according to the band, just "one and a half" music venues. Over the last 18 months, they've been gigging relentlessly to bring their brand of cheerfully nihilistic rock to a slew of stages across the UK and Europe, earning high profile support slots for Queens Of The Stone Age and We Are Scientists along the way.

Guitar duties are handled by Steph Norris and Joe Perry (no, not *that* Joe Perry) and together, they've poured gallons of fuzzy, scuzzy goodness into infectious 10-track debut, *Killjoy*. According to Steph, their MO is to "scream, thrash guitars and put the heaviest overdrive on". In her case, that means tearing it up on a Fender Telecaster – acquired several years ago in the unusual setting of a London KFC – and running it through a Redbeard Effects Hairy Squid Colossal Fuzz en route to a scorching pair of Hot Rod Deluxe amps. Three other signal-distorting effects, "going from soft to heavy," give her a full spectrum of crunchy, gritty, and downright gnarly tones to play with.

Doing most of the dirty work for Joe is a Hudson Electronics/Regent Sounds Broadcast, coupled with everybody's favourite little green viral sensation, the DigiTech Bad Monkey. Amp-wise, a spread of clean-to-filthy tones comes from the canny pairing of a Roland JC-120 with a '70s Fender Champ. "I always see them as siblings, like a big brother and a little brother sat next to each other," he smiles. "There's this little tiny thing and a big brute next to it!"

The "unexpected" hero of his rig is a highly affordable and surprisingly durable Fender Player Mustang 90, which he swears is "going to be my number one for the rest of my life," provided it survives getting "beat up to f**k" on a nightly basis. "It's changed the way I play," he enthuses. "I kind of smash it more. It gets thrown around a lot and somehow has survived."

Beyond seemingly indestructible gear, the experience of watching audiences go wild for their most untamed moments is what's driven Coach Party to raucous heights on *Killjoy*. "Touring has definitely opened up the door to being a bit more confident," says Steph. "When you listen back to our first recording, it's very young and naive: two guitars, bass and drums. Now, we push it a bit more!"

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TRIPTYCH

THE POWER OF THREE

Pushing the boundaries of vintage Strat tones into uncharted territories of super heavy fuzz-drenched riffing

"For me, the perfect Strat tone has been an ongoing journey for the last few years, and I'm happy to say that the journey has ended with the Triptych single coils"

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